

Stress Relief and Anxiety Management

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Key points from presentation by Dr Amatullah Bahaziq, Ph.D Psychology and
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There is overwhelming medical evidence about the many health benefits of tai chi, especially in reducing stress.

- A **meta-analysis of 40 studies involving 3817 participants** found that regular tai chi practice significantly increased psychological well-being, including reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression.
- [Studies from the National Institutes of Health \(NIH\) show^{1\)}](#) that tai chi is associated with a significant reduction in anxiety symptoms, particularly in healthy adults and older adults with cardiovascular disease risk factors.

Tai chi works through a combination of physical movement, mindful breathing, and focused attention. Regular practice can lead to reduced anxiety and depression symptoms, enhanced mood, and better sleep.

- **Mindful Movement:**

Tai chi involves slow, flowing movements that encourage body awareness and release physical tension, promoting relaxation.

- **Dan Tian Breathing:**

The practice emphasizes slow, deep breaths using the diaphragmatic movement, which activates the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting a sense of calm and reducing the body's stress response. And activate the healing system.

- **Reduced Stress Hormone Levels:**

Studies have shown that tai chi can help lower levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, which contributes to the overall reduction of stress.

- **Improved Mood:**

By promoting relaxation and reducing stress, tai chi can positively impact mood and emotional well-being.

- **Endorphins**

Tai chi practice triggers the release of factors such as endorphins, making practitioners feel happy, joyful, and positive for up to several hours, and aids in reducing pain.

¹⁾ Qigong and Tai Chi for Mood Regulation

Qigong and Tai-Chi have been shown to improve psychological well-being and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression by altering the autonomic system and restoring homeostasis. These effects could occur through changes in multiple prefrontal regions, the limbic system, and the striatum or in the expression of genes linked to inflammatory responses and stress-related pathways.

Abstract –

Qigong and Tai-Chi are traditional self-healing, self-cultivation exercises originating in ancient China. These exercises are characterized by coordinated body posture and movements, deep rhythmic breathing, meditation, and mental focus based on traditional Chinese medicine theories. Although the exact mechanisms of Qigong's and Tai-Chi's effects on physical and mental well-being are unknown, these practices may be viewed as meditative movements and share many of the healing elements observed in mindfulness meditation. Clinical studies including randomized controlled trials and meta-analyses have shown that both Qigong and Tai-Chi have beneficial effects on psychological well-being and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Qigong and Tai-Chi frequently involve anchoring attention to interoceptive sensations related to breath or other parts of the body, which has been shown to enhance nonreactivity to aversive thoughts and impulses. Preliminary studies suggest that the slow movements in Qigong and Tai-Chi with slowing of breath frequency could alter the autonomic system and restore homeostasis, attenuating stress related to hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis reactivity and modulating the balance of the autonomic nervous system toward parasympathetic dominance. Qigong's and Tai-Chi's effects on emotion regulation could occur through changes in multiple prefrontal regions, the limbic system, and the striatum or in the expression of genes linked to inflammatory responses and stress-related pathways.