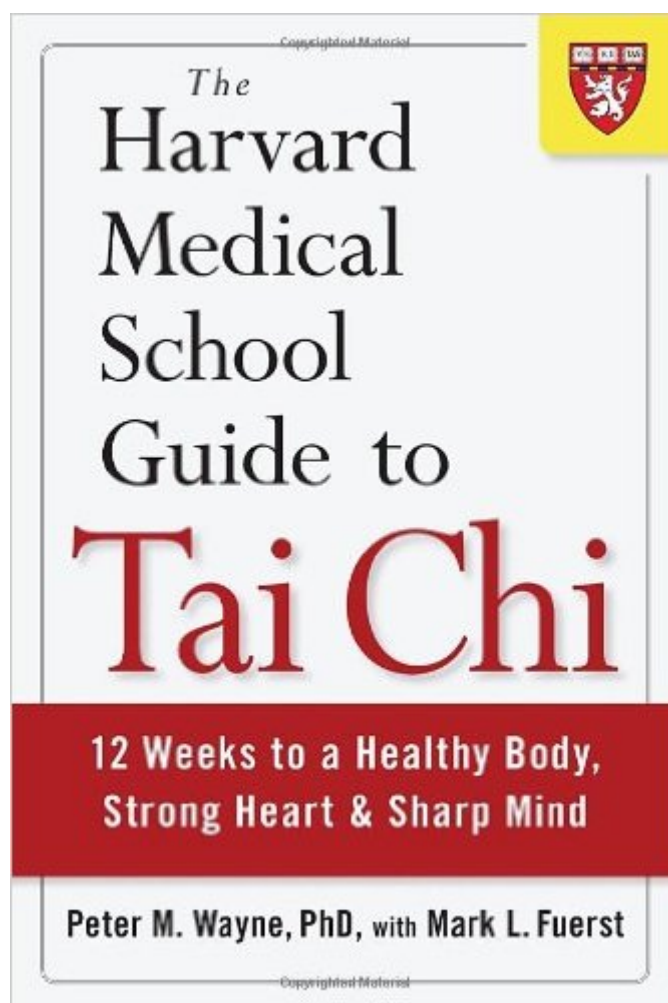


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The Harvard Medical School Guide To Tai Chi: 12 Weeks To A Healthy Body, Strong Heart, And Sharp Mind (Harvard Health Publications)



Synopsis

Conventional medical science on the Chinese art of Tai Chi now shows what Tai Chi masters have known for centuries: regular practice leads to more vigor and flexibility, better balance and mobility, and a sense of well-being. Cutting-edge research from Harvard Medical School also supports the long-standing claims that Tai Chi also has a beneficial impact on the health of the heart, bones, nerves and muscles, immune system, and the mind. This research provides fascinating insight into the underlying physiological mechanisms that explain how Tai Chi actually works. Dr. Peter M. Wayne, a longtime Tai Chi teacher and a researcher at Harvard Medical School, developed and tested protocols similar to the simplified program he includes in this book, which is suited to people of all ages, and can be done in just a few minutes a day. This book includes:

- The basic program, illustrated by more than 50 photographs
- Practical tips for integrating Tai Chi into everyday activities
- An introduction to the traditional principles of Tai Chi
- Up-to-date summaries of the research literature on the health benefits of Tai Chi
- How Tai Chi can enhance work productivity, creativity, and sports performance
- And much more

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm an avid Tai Chi practitioner (nine years in, still have a lot to learn) who is loving this book. It was recommended by my Tai Chi teacher who, like Peter Wayne, teaches integrative medicine at the

college level. Wayne is an excellent writer. He presents Tai Chi from all angles in his Eight Active Ingredients of Tai Chi model. Seems right on to me. I enjoy Tai Chi for many reasons, physical, mental, social, spiritual (using that term in a non-supernatural sense). I'm open to the farther-out Chinese medicine side of Tai Chi, filled with talk of qi, meridians, subtle energy flows, and such, but don't find that a belief in all this is necessary to enjoy my practice. So I really like how Wayne looks at Tai Chi from both a scientific, rational, research-based point of view, and also from an experiential, intuitive, practice-based point of view. Like Tai Chi and the Taoist philosophy to which it is strongly related, this book harmonizes seeming yin-yang opposites appealingly. I'm only several chapters into the book, but wanted to share a review ASAP because I'm enjoying it so much. I've read quite a few books about Tai Chi, most of which are much more traditional in style and substance. "The Harvard Medical School to Tai Chi" is unique. It will be enjoyed by Tai Chi beginners and old-timers alike, including those who aren't interested in taking a class but still want to explore what Tai Chi has to offer. Wayne presents old concepts and practices in fresh ways. I heartily agree that introducing people to Tai Chi by having them learn a lengthy form (standard sequence of movements) can be intimidating for many.

I am really enjoying reading the book I tend to skip around to the sections that are interesting me at the moment. First impressions are that it is for every level basic as well as advanced. It's particularly well written, with lots of nice quotes, favorites follow: 'Hall of Happiness' by GRAND MASTER CHEN MAN CHING, snippet: 'Let us fortify ourselves against weakness and learn to be self reliant, without ever a moment's lapse. Then our resolution will become the very air we breath, the world we live in; then we will be as happy as a fish in crystal waters. This is the joy which lasts, that we can carry with us to the end of our days, if you can, what greater happiness can life bestow?' knowing others is intelligence, knowing yourself is true wisdom, mastering others is strength, mastering yourself is true power' Lao Tzu The 8 active ingredients framework is a very effective model of representing the key ingredients of a successful Tai Chi practice (some of which I did not pay attention too before), he elaborates why these are so important, and it makes total sense: '1. Awareness, Mindfulness, Focused Attention' '2. Intention, Belief, Expectation' '3. Dynamic Structural Integration' '4. Active Relaxation of Mind and Body' '5. Aerobic Exercise, Musculoskeletal Strengthening and Flexibility' '6. Natural Freerer Breathing' '7. Social Interaction and Community' '8. Embodied Spirituality, Philosophy and Ritual' The writings convey an understanding of the benefits of Tai Chi with explanation in a very rational way, that is palatable to the western audience. The Tai Chi instructions form allows a sampling of tai chi practice.

This is a revision of my initial review, 3 weeks after the original, once I tried to use the exercises to start my 12 weeks to a healthy body, as the title proclaims. I considered revising downward to 2 stars on the basis that its main purpose is not sufficiently met. I ordered this book because I am not very satisfied with a 3-month course I am currently taking, which I feel gives inadequate emphasis to performing the exercises to derive the most benefit from them. Instead we concentrate on memorizing the order for the sequence of hundreds of movements which appear to be randomly repeated. This sort of regimentation probably derives from the martial arts which tai chi comes from, but is tedious and not necessary for the health benefit. My course also gives no attention to breathing, and in my mind is not sufficiently bilateral in regard to the body. Maybe these defects would be addressed in a later course, but I don't want to wait. As this book says, there are many types of Tai Chi and one of the virtues of this book is that it breaks from the mind-set of apprenticeship in which the rewards come only after years of training with a guru. I was also interested in reading the scientific basis for the benefits of Tai Chi, which I have read often and believed, but was interested in how the claims were substantiated, and I was not disappointed. For example, the discussion of balance gives a good explanation of how balance is achieved normally and how Tai Chi helps maintain or restore balance. The discussion of integration tai chi with western medicine was very good, too. Furthermore, we are told how each exercise specifically addresses different physical functions, including relaxing and stress prevention or reduction.

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