

## Tai Chi is a Gentle Exercise to Support Mental Health and Chronic Stress

Since the start of the pandemic, and the ever-changing situations we find ourselves in for supporting our health, we know that we have not moved our bodies enough in the last few years. Additionally, we have been isolated or gathering with a select group of people. The effects of this behavior change are yet to be realized through scientific rigors, but experience shares with us new insights.

“These findings suggest that regular exercise training has beneficial antidepressant and anxiolytic effects, and these are associated with a decrease in the neuroendocrine response to stress.”

In a study on the effects of Tai Chi on Mental Health, emotional support, and brain power through aging from [2012](#)<sup>1</sup> there are many insights we are experiencing now, after the spread of Covid, and the isolation many of us have experienced for such prolonged periods. This study found that gentle exercise performed by those with chronic conditions could lift levels of anxiety, stress, and emotional challenges.

When we look at the way Tai Chi is shared, we often think about the groups of people in the park in the center of a city. Many people express the beauty of watching Tai Chi, and the calmness that they experienced by being near people doing Tai Chi. It is amazing to think the power of Tai

Chi can be felt by those not involved but observing. Imagine the power from within the group. By joining the group, the power of the moves, the connection to others, and the intention of supporting well-being all work together.

As we consider what kinds of anxiety we face daily, or the worry that plays around in our minds throughout the day, we accept those emotions as being a part of us. But what if the emotions are the result of a hippocampus being stagnant, and hormones being blocked or sedated? What if by not meeting with other people we have tuned down our ability to be supportive of our well-being? These are interesting thoughts, and the research shows that by participating in Tai Chi as a group to support well-being, we can reverse

symptoms. We can lessen our emotional stress levels and bring harmony and balance to our core systems to support well-being over time. We can impact our lives well past the class of Tai Chi we attended or the group that we practiced with at the park.

As you evaluate your well-being status, consider the ailments

“Exercise improves physiological function of human being, including metabolic level, neurons proliferation, and neuroendocrine autoregulation, which benefit psychological performance directly or indirectly, such as positive emotion, emotional stability, stress tolerance, and anxious relief.”

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3140024/>

that call at you daily or frequently. Consider how much movement you are doing. Do you think that by adding a class or two of gentle movement exercises to your week you might be able to change your chronic stress or symptoms? The research supports this outcome. What are you waiting for?



Michelle Greenwell, BA Psych, MSc CAM, Ph.D. (Final) CIH (Complementary and Integrative Health) has been a Tai Chi enthusiast for almost three decades. Her passion for exploring how movement can release pain and discomfort has led her to many different mentors and programs to optimize techniques. Michelle works with clients one on one, in group settings, and special programs with Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Dance, and the Healing Arts. You can learn more about her FREE resources and personalized classes at <https://linktr.ee/dancedebut>.