

## Tai Chi Qigong The Perfect Exercise?

T'ai Chi & Qigong have exploded across the media landscape recently. Time Magazine in an article on Tai Chi benefits called Tai Chi "the perfect exercise. "While The Wall Street Journal recently did a front page lifestyle story entitled "[Qigong] The Next Yoga:A Sweat Free Workout - Tiger Woods' Secret Weapon?" So, why all the buzz on Tai Chi & Qigong? Partly because today's high stressed fast moving population is seeking, not only health & fitness, but serenity. Serenity may sound superficial in today's busy world, but that aspect of Tai Chi, may be why it is increasingly utilized in healthcare, corporate wellness, education, and even in prison and drug rehabilitation programs.

The current hubbub about Tai Chi & Qigong may be that we are only now seeing the breaking of a tsunami wave of growing evidence unearthed by western medical research that has been quietly building for the last decade. Qigong is a Traditional Chinese medical/health practice that directly translated means "breathing exercise," or "energy exercise." Tai Chi is a sophisticated form of moving qigong, which involves a series of choreographed movements done in a relaxed and flowing way. Both have gained increasing attention by western medical researchers in the last decade that has been gaining steam, and resulted in more research dollars going toward discovering their benefits. The National Institute of Mental Health has increased funding to further research these ancient, yet modern, health techniques.

A couple of such study's findings, one a ten year study through Harvard, Yale, and Emory Universities, stunned researchers when they discovered that the gentle, slow, relaxing, low impact Tai Chi improved the balance of practitioners profoundly, reducing their risk of falling by 47.5%. Another found that Tai Chi offered significant cardiovascular benefits, roughly the same benefits as moderate impact aerobics. Yet, another study sited in the Hawaii Medical Journal asserted that Tai Chi increased breathing capacity and relieved back and neck aches in practitioners.

The pain relief and low impact aspects of Tai Chi was good news for everyone, but offered even more hope for those suffering from rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Tai Chi being a weight bearing exercise offered the potential advantages of stimulating bone growth and strengthening connective tissue. The only concern was if they (RA sufferers) could handle a weight bearing exercise without exacerbation of joint symptoms. The American Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation reported on a study that found RA sufferers practicing a specially tailored form of Tai Chi suffered "no" significant exacerbation of joint symptoms. This was great news, not just for RA sufferers but for all maturing baby boomers looking for a health regimen that is kind to the joints.

Surprisingly, given its gentle nature, Tai Chi burns a significant amount of calories as well, 280 per hour. To understand how significant this is, realize that down-hill skiing burns about 350 per hour. Yet, Tai Chi is gentle enough to be done in business clothes in the office without even breaking a sweat. Which is one reason Tai Chi and Qigong are increasingly being used in corporate wellness programs. However, there are perhaps even more important reasons Tai Chi is being used, not only in corporate wellness, but health care, education, and even prisons and drug rehabilitation institutions.

Tai Chi provides a grouping of benefits that helps: reduce productivity losses in employees; may reduce health care costs preemptively; enable students to focus; and also empower those rehabilitating from drug abuse, etc;. to evolve more healthy productive lifestyles. This is the result of mood homeostasis Tai Chi practice fosters. The Journal of Psychosomatic Research reports a Tai Chi study's findings, "[Test Subjects] reported less tension, depression, anger, fatigue, confusion and state-anxiety; they felt more vigorous, and in general they had less total mood disturbance. Given that 70 to 85% of illness sending patients to the doctor are rooted in unmanaged stress, and that U.S. business is estimated to be losing upwards of \$300 billion annually due to unmanaged stress, Tai Chi's potential mood-stabilizing benefits are gaining increasing attention. Also in education, the rise in ADD and ADHD symptoms in our nation's youth, has peaked interest in Tai Chi by some education professionals. This may be partly due to a recent study from the University of Miami School of Medicine finding that Tai Chi provided substantial symptom reduction in students suffering from Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).. In light of the multi-dimensional benefits these ancient health

practices offer, which are now being validated by modern health research, Time Magazine's description of Tai Chi as "the perfect exercise," may be a very accurate description for this ancient mind/body health technique.

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為什麼股民們會同時買進或賣出股票，造成行情潮漲潮落？為什麼悠悠球有時會同時流行起來？這些現象的一個共同特點就是帶有明顯的巧合性，引起了研究人員的關注。西班牙《趣味》月刊 月號發表題為《一切同步》的文章，談巧合的學問：

作為一門新學說的共時學領域的研究發現，很多巧合的秘訣可以從數學和物理學中去尋找。巴塞羅那大學基礎物理學教授米克爾·魯維解釋說：“我們有時候認為的巧合，可能是因為它們符合這樣的‘超級規律’：這種規律能將某一事物或某一集體的某個階段的發生時間聯系在一起。”

螢火蟲為什麼會同時發光？

1680年，荷蘭旅行家肯普弗在暹羅即現在的泰國旅行。他在湄南河上順流而下的時候注意到一個奇特的現象：“一些明亮發光的昆蟲飛到一棵樹上，停在樹枝上，有時候它們同時閃光，有時候又同時不閃光，閃光與不閃光很有規律，在時間上很準確。”肯普弗所說的昆蟲是螢火蟲，在海上航行的船員在此之前也看到了他所說的現象。螢火蟲現象表明，生物同沒有生命的物體一樣，也有著同步性。沒有生命的物體的一個典型例子是鐘擺。當幾個鐘放在一起時，它們的鐘擺就會同步，向同一方向擺動。超導體的發現是另一個例子。其電子在正常條件下是不怎麼導電的，但在非常低的溫度下，它們的電阻就會同時變小。

發生這些巧合的原因是什麼？最新研究表明，無論是電子還是螢火蟲，都可以用數學定律來解釋。數學家、美國康奈爾大學教授史蒂文·斯特羅加茨說，假定一個集體中的所有成員都是來回變化的，即從一種狀態變化到另一種狀態，例如從發光到不發光，那麼這種現象是可以用數學來解釋的。

倫敦千年橋為什麼會振動？

最有名的共振現象之一發生在倫敦。2000年6月10日倫敦千年橋建成通行時，成千上萬的倫敦人開始通過大橋，它的690噸鋼鐵開始振動。大橋呈S形振動，振動引起的偏差達到20厘米。振動造成人們的恐慌，大橋不得不臨時關閉。這是怎麼一回事？斯特羅加茨在他的書中解釋說：“我們在大橋上行走時，每走一步都會造成兩邊受力。這個力很小，而且行人之間不會協調一致，這些力會相互抵消。但是當所有人開始同時邁步時，這種作用於兩邊的力就會集中在一起，形成共振。”建築公司的工程師通過研究發現，一個又長又軟的橋，就同倫敦的這座橋一樣，如果上面有很多人在行走，“那麼有一部分人的行走就有可能因為巧合而是同步的，這樣的共振形成的力就會超出大橋所能承受的力”。

科學家們還拿這種現象與人體細胞的活動加以比較。千百萬個細胞分子不知出于什麼原因，會一致地做某個特定的動作。讓我們來看看心臟細胞，它們的特點就是同步振蕩。它們同時做著一個動作，使我們的心瓣膜舒張開，然後又一下子停下來，心瓣膜就收縮了。

在我們作為社會群體的表現中，也能發現同步現象。例如，當一場戲劇演出結束的時候，帷幕徐徐落下，劇場內在幾秒鐘時間裡鴉雀無聲，突然有人帶頭鼓掌，於是整個劇場都鼓起掌來。在這種場合還有第二個同步現象：掌聲在最初的時刻是零亂的，節奏是不同的，但是在幾秒鐘後，每個人都和著別人的節奏鼓掌，大家都用共同的節奏歡呼起來。

兩個人之間的距離有多大？

人類行為中的同步現象可以用網絡理論來解釋。這是一門新學科，研究的是群體之間的聯系並已獲得驚人的發現。例如，信息是如何由一小批人向其他人傳播開來的，疾病和信息病毒是如何四處蔓延的。美國聖母大學教授、匈牙利裔物理學家奧爾貝特·鮑勞巴希在他的新書中說：“網絡不僅存在于因特網中，而且存在于現實世界。”他在書中分析了這些現象，主張“把自然界看作一個萬維網。自然界裡的任何事物都不是孤立的，大多數事物都是互動的，相互關聯的，有很多因素是推動它們發生變化的因素”。鮑勞巴希分析了各種類型的社會網絡。在這些網絡中，我們再次發現可以用數學方法來表述人的行為方式。我們假設有一個晚間聚會，在一開始的時候，我們只是和少數人在談論一個不尋常的消息。隨著這些人在聚會上又同其他人的交談，這個消息就不脛而走，傳播開來。如果過了一會兒，有人又把這個消息告訴了我們，那是毫不奇怪的，雖然它最初是我們說出去的。網絡效應使信息四處傳播。根據這個網絡理論，我們這些最先傳播這個消息的人就是一個集群，每個人就是一個節點；如果每個節點同這個集群以外的人保持聯系，就足以使這個消息傳播開來。

將百老匯戲劇搬上銀幕獲得成功的一部作品是《六度分離》，它也是網絡理論的一個例證。《六度分離》將下述假設演繹成一部喜劇：世界上的任何兩個人，不管相距多麼遙遠，他們之間最多只隔著6次連接。也就是說，我們最多通過6個中間人就能與北極的愛斯基摩人或與巴塔哥尼亞的牧民進行接觸。這個文藝作品的創作靈感來自60年代哈佛大學的斯坦利·米爾格拉姆教授的一個試驗。這個試驗的目的是要知道任何兩個美國人之間的“距離”。他用威奇托和奧馬哈兩個城市的居民做試驗。他要求那裡的居民將一封信寄給馬薩諸塞州的一個“目標”人士，如果他們不認識這個“目標”人士，那就把信寄給有可能認識“目標”人士的中間人。160人參加了試驗，有42封信只經過5.5次轉手就隨最後的目的地，這個“距離”如此之小，令米爾格拉姆也感到驚訝。在戲劇和電影中，這個數字“根據劇本的要求”被改成了6次。

著名作家博爾赫斯曾經寫道：“世間萬物影響世間萬物。”自然界似乎在日益證明他的論斷有理。因此，當你下次在橋上行走發現橋振動起來的時候或者有一個愛斯基摩人來敲你家的大門時，不要感到奇怪，你要想到這就是共時學。