

# Health WellNews

SPRING has arrived...

## Differentiating Tai Chi and Qi Gong

All over the world, mindfulness practices have been and are becoming more and more common. As our everyday lives become more hectic, it seems we are all seeking ways to calm our minds and spirits. This is part of the reason why practices like meditation, tai chi and qi gong are becoming more prevalent and popular. All of these things help us find our center and become grounded, so we can deal with the stressors of daily life. As we move into spring and daily outdoor exercise becomes more appealing, let's look at two of these mindfulness techniques. Perhaps you'll find one of them speaks to you, or at least you'll understand what that guy in the park is doing.

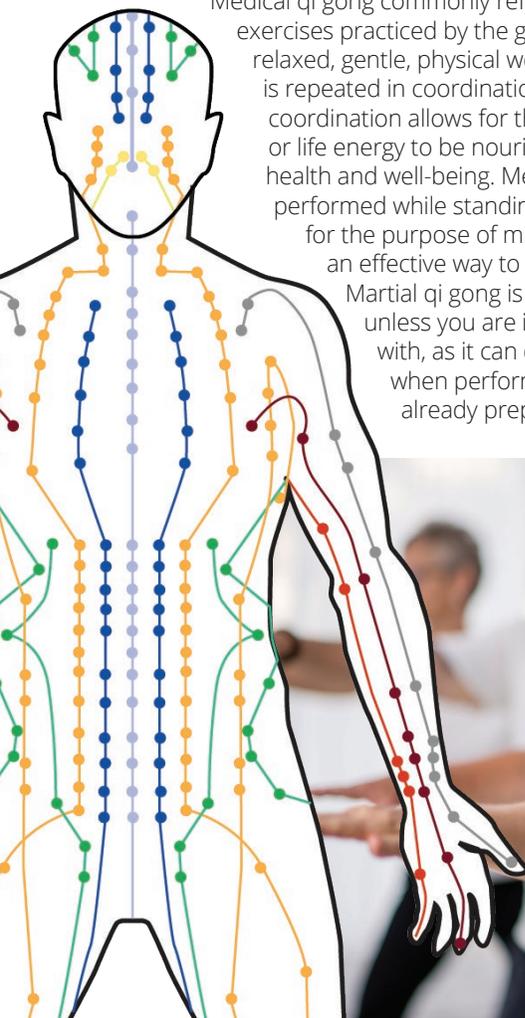
Tai chi and qi gong are both forms of energy work that began thousands of years ago in ancient China. Qi gong literally means "life energy work." It is a healing art that cultivates physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological health. Qi gong has three categories: medical, meditative and martial. There are more than 2,000 qi gong exercises that comprise hundreds of different styles. Qi gong can be performed by moving, standing, sitting or lying down. Its simple movements can be very effective and can be excellent for the central nervous system and general health.

Medical qi gong commonly refers to movement exercises practiced by the general public. It is a slow, relaxed, gentle, physical workout where each move is repeated in coordination with the breath. This coordination allows for the Qi (pronounced "chee"), or life energy to be nourished, thus improving health and well-being. Meditative qi gong is performed while standing, sitting or lying down for the purpose of mind-body integration. It is an effective way to relax the mind and body. Martial qi gong is not a practice to begin unless you are in good shape to begin with, as it can damage the body systems when performed by those who are not already prepared.

Tai chi is another healing art that originated in China. Tai chi is a series of continuous, slow, relaxed and smooth flowing movements. Tai chi provides numerous benefits for people of all ages and health conditions. There are many tai chi forms, but they all follow certain rules and involve precise body movements. Done correctly, tai chi stimulates energy and power that frees up blockages, thus allowing the Qi to flow throughout the body more effectively. Tai chi takes considerably longer to learn than Qi gong because the forms are more complex. Tai chi is a series of forms that are not repeated like they are in qi gong. Instead one form is followed by another and each form is an integral part of the next that makes up a continuous flowing movement. This allows the Qi to flow along a clear unbroken path.

The differences between tai chi and qi gong can be simplified as follows: tai chi power is dense while qi gong power is light in nature. Tai chi requires advanced and elaborate choreography, whereas qi gong does not. Qi gong is focused on cultivating Qi, while tai chi is more about the coordination, precision and unity, which allows the Qi to manifest as a result of the form.

If you're looking for a great way to exercise without going to the gym, you might want to consider either tai chi or qi gong. There are studios all around the world. It is recommended you try them both several times before deciding upon one or the other.



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