

Ai Chi

Ruth Sova

“My fitness classes have done my body wonders but Ai Chi has reached my soul.”
Audrey Thompson

I. The Ai Chi Program

A. Description and History

1. A combination of deep breathing and slow broad movements standing in chest depth water. Tai Chi, Shiatsu, and Qigong concepts are combined with basic movement patterns.
2. Mr. Jun Konno from Yokohama, JAPAN, created Ai Chi.

B. Concepts

1. Roundness, continuity, naturalness and slowness. Slowness allows reflection and self-observation. It is an excellent approach to teaching movement - especially if a person is fearful of changing movement patterns. Clients need to challenge habitual movement patterns through continual self-assessment.
2. Movements must flow (not forceful in the beginning of a move but of equal force throughout the move). Flowing movements integrate mental, physical, and spiritual energy.
3. Unify with the water (muscles and joints will relax and eyes become partly closed). Deep within us is something very real but, unlike everything else in us, it doesn't change. In yoga it's called "purusa" - "that which sees" or "that which sees correctly".
4. Repetition (deep relaxation can only occur when you feel stable in the water and confident in your ability to follow the progression ... repetition gives this to us). Repetition should be done for it's own sake without competition or regard to success or failure.
5. Pelvic mechanics and alignment. Twists created by the trunk stability movements are neutralizing, cleansing and organic. They improve digestion and remove sluggishness. They are effective in relieving backaches, headaches and stiffness in shoulders and neck. Correct alignment is crucial.

C. General information

1. Work the range of motion, not tension or pain
2. The two hour pain rules applies

[Type text]

Ai Chi

II. The Purpose of Ai Chi

A. Benefits

1. Flexibility, range of motion, and general mobility increase
2. Increases metabolism, caloric consumption
3. Increases blood circulation
4. Improves the circulation of energy along important accupoint meridians
5. Massages vital organs
6. Improves liver efficiency
7. Decreases stress, insomnia, depression, anger, fatigue, anxiety and confusion - the water and music are used to locate and free the body of stress and to encourage a state of relaxed awareness
8. Increases mental alertness
9. Creates “design sense” (a feeling that you’re doing what the body was designed to do) and therefore, improves kinesthetic sense (our perception of how we move)
10. Breathing creates most of the benefits

*The yogic breathing technique benefits appear to be boundless.

Neurobiological	increase alpha EEG activity right hemispheric activation decrease sns arousal decrease hpa activation
Cardiorespiratory	decrease heart rate, BP increase hrv decrease VO ₂
Metabolic	neutral RQ (eg.0.85) decrease blood lactate
Musculoskeletal	increase relaxation decrease EMG activity
Endocrine	decrease epi, cortisol decrease serum GH, TSH, and prolactin decrease ACTH
Cognitive	decrease beta-endorphin decrease arousal

Legend: alpha EEG activity; sns=sympathetic nervous system; hpa=hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal activation; BP=blood pressure; Q=cardiac output; VO₂=oxygen consumption; HRV=heart rate variability; RQ=respiratory quotient, ratio of carbohydrate (CHO) to fat oxidation; epi=epinephrine; GH=growth hormone; TSH=thyroid stimulating hormone; ACTH=adrenocorticotrophic hormone; EMG=electromyographic activity, muscular tension

[Type text]

Ai Chi

B. Ai Chi Applications

1. Chronic disorders and other diseases such as pain management, fibromyalgia, arthritis, cancer (especially mastectomy), MS, CP, immunodeficiency disorders and medical self-care.
2. Respiratory disorders such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and pulmonary rehabilitation.
3. Cardiovascular problems including congestive heart failure, angina, stress related cardiac arrhythmias, mitral valve prolapse and cardiac rehabilitation.
4. Circulatory disorders such as hypertension and migraine headaches.
5. Metabolic disorders including eating behaviors, weight control, type II diabetes, type I diabetes and obesity.
6. Psychological problems such as chronic fatigue syndrome, anxiety and depressive disorders, anger management, stress-related dysrhythmias and violence.
7. Musculoskeletal or orthopedic disturbances including low back pain, scoliosis, carpal tunnel syndrome (or any repetitive stress syndrome), musculoskeletal injuries and surgeries, balance deficits, prenatal, sports injuries, and accident and fall prevention.
8. Neurological disturbances including cerebral vascular accidents (strokes) and traumatic brain injury.
9. Endocrinological disorders such as immunodeficiency disorders, fatigue, menopause therapy and hormonal management.

III. Psyche and Soma

A. Body

- Think and feel your stance.
- Begin with your feet in a wide stance. Point your knees and toes somewhat out and keep your back straight.
- Bend your knees softly. Your arms are resting easily at shoulder level.
- Chin is relaxed and slightly down.
- Inhale through your nose and turn your palms up. (You will get a little "taller", chin will come up and back slightly, and your rib cage will "open.")
- Exhale easily through your mouth and turn your palms down.
- Your weight is evenly balanced.

[Type text]

Ai Chi

B. Mind

We live in a dissociated state in which mind and body are treated as separate entities. We depend on external forces to “fix” our bodies and minds, while unaware of our own innate ability to attain and sustain a mind body balance to achieve health.

- Relaxation
- Breathing
 1. Diaphragmatic
 2. Yogic

Most lungs have the capacity to hold up to 7 pints of oxygen yet most of us breathe in only 2 pints

- Meditate
- Unity

C. Chi

- Energy / Prana / Zen / Chi
- Bodymind
- Tai Chi Concepts

The T'ai Chi Masters Say:

- *Yuan* Make your motions in a circular way, thus aiming for internal and external harmony.
- *Sung* Relax both inside and outside to promote blood circulation
- *Ching* Do not tense your body or become rigid, so that you may be able to move lightly
- *Yun* Move at an even speed controlled by your mind
- *Cheng* Maintain good balance and posture, not letting the body lean to either side
- *Shu* Move your body in an easy, comfortable and relaxed way
- *Tsing* Drive out worldly thoughts from the mind and concentrate your mind

[Type text]

III. Ai Chi and Beyond

A. Basic Ai Chi

1. *Breathing and upper extremity movements*

- **Contemplating** Breathe ... palms up inhale, palms down exhale
- **Floating** Shoulder extension and flexion
- **Uplifting** Shoulder abduction and adduction
- **Enclosing** Horizontal shoulder adduction and abduction
- **Folding** Adduction crossing the midline at navel, and open with elbows in

2. *Trunk stability movements*

- **Soothing** Unilateral horizontal adduction and abduction
- **Gathering** Turn and unilateral horizontal posterior adduction and abduction
- **Freeing** Combination of the two above movements
- **Shifting** Unilateral horizontal adduction and abduction with weight shift
- **Accepting** Turn and bilateral horizontal abduction and adduction

3. *Lower extremity movements*

- **Accepting with Grace** Lift forward leg during abduction of bilateral horizontal abduction and adduction
- **Rounding** Lift back leg during adduction of bilateral horizontal abduction and adduction
- **Balancing** Lift back leg with shoulder extension, extend leg back with shoulder flexion

4. *Cultivating the Chi*

- **Encircling with a Shift** Shift weight to the left as both arms push forward and then left and return
- **Encircling** No shift. Circle arms to the left and then to the right
- **Surrounding** While holding a ball pivot left and take ball to behind, then right
- **Nurturing** Pivot left, arms out forward, scoop and return

5. *Coordinated total body movements*

- **Flowing** Shoulder adduction crossing midline at navel with legs in wide stance, open with elbows in as legs cross
- **Reflecting** Shoulder adduction crossing midline at navel as legs cross, open with elbows while pivoting in half circle
- **Suspending** Simultaneously float into arms and legs crossed, pivot and open

[Type text]

Ai Chi

B. Cultivating the Chi

This Ai Chi experience is designed for those comfortable with the Ai Chi movements and progressions. We will go beyond the basic Ai Chi workshop with experimentation in physical positioning, breathing cadences and techniques, and cognitive focus. Precise kinesiology for safety and effectiveness in the Cultivating the Chi is included. The new Ai Chi terminology will be used.

C. Ai Chi Ne

This Ai Chi Ne (ne means two in Japanese) experience is designed for those comfortable with working and breathing with others. We will with experiment with physical positioning, breathing cadences and techniques, and body awareness. Precise kinesiology for safety and effectiveness in the Ai Chi Ne partner work is included.

D. Ai Chi – Balance and Trunk Stabilization / Core

Using Ai Chi with some Pilate's concepts this session will apply core stability and fall prevention techniques to develop balance and lumbar stabilization for your clients. The focus of this Ai Chi class will be on deep, rather than superficial, muscles. Learn to use the trunk muscles to initiate movement in the extremities. Balance, mobility and stability all in one program! Why? Our clients need to relearn movement patterns to work from the inside out. This technique will assist practitioners in teaching clients how to trigger deep tissue muscles prior to extremity musculature firing. This gives a solid base for balance and safe movement.

E. Ai Chi Certification

Compare the benefits of Ai Chi for the average healthy adult and modifications to Ai Chi for special situations. Hear about the Eastern thought behind the movement performance and sequence of Ai Chi. Examine the continuing evolution of Ai Chi with several new ways to make the basic program more effective. Analyze the body and mind efforts necessary for a positive effect. Apply teaching techniques including lecturing, music, pacing and flow of a class or workshop. Examine several different ways to focus your Ai Chi instruction to create new or advanced Ai Chi opportunities for your clients.

F. Other Workshops – Grounding, ADD/ADHD, Bariatric, Spiraling, Neuro, etc

Students who say they “don't feel anything” should understand that most of us are used to feeling sensation only in the contraction of a muscle. It takes awhile to train our attention to discover the subtleties such as observing our breath or movement of the diaphragm or skin.

Ruth Sova
Email ruthsova@ruthsova.com
Web www.ruthsova.com

[Type text]

Ai Chi Educational Materials

For books, articles, poolside laminates, DVDs, CDs, certification, etc:

- **Aquatic Therapy and Rehab Institute (ATRI)** Ai Chi workshops, certifications, seminars
Web: www.atri.org, Email: atri@atri.org
For FREE articles on Ai Chi go to www.atri.org and click on Articles. Scroll down to 'Techniques' and find Ai Chi.
- **Aquatic Exercise Association (AEA)** also carries workshops
www.aeawave.com
- **Ruth Sova** ruthsova@ruthsova.com send questions you have here
- **Square Market** (carries all Ai Chi educational material) Online Store <https://ruth-sova-103927.square.site/>

For discussion groups about Ai Chi

1. **Join (FREE) the ATRI eList.** More therapeutic practice discussions happen on this eList. Go to www.atri.org and click on Bulletin Board/eList and then follow the directions. Once you're the email is www.elist@atri.org
2. **Join (FREE) the Ai Chi International eList.** You can subscribe to our Ai Chi elist (it's free) so you get updates and notices when courses are coming up, and news from other Ai Chi Practitioners. Go to <https://gaggle.email/join/aichi@gaggle.email>