APEX TAI CHI INSIGHTS & PRACTICE

28TH SEPTEMBER 2026 | WEEK 25

Protecting Your Energy for What Matters

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This Week's Apex Tai Chi Guidance

Protecting Your Energy for What Matters

Dear friends,

It is possible to spend a whole day thinking, solving, helping, hurrying and holding everything together, then realise that the people, work, health or recovery that matter most received the smallest part of us. Being busy is not always the same as using effort well.

Sometimes the mind drifts towards every unfinished task, every imagined problem and every fear about what might happen next. The body often joins in. The jaw tightens, the shoulders lift, the breath becomes restricted and we begin to brace against life before life has actually asked us to.

This week's intention is not about denying fear or forcing ourselves to feel positive. It is an invitation to notice when fear-based living is organising too much of our attention, then to let some of that unnecessary bracing begin to melt. Acceptance does not mean approving of every circumstance. It means meeting what is here clearly enough to choose our next response.

From that clearer place, congruent and joyful living becomes more possible. Congruence means that our attention, values and actions begin to face in the same direction. Joy need not be dramatic. It may be the quiet relief of no longer giving every demand the same amount of us.

Not everything deserves the same amount of you.

Through Tai Chi and Qigong, we will explore Song, the release of unnecessary tension without collapse, and Yi, the purposeful direction of attention and intention. Song releases what is unnecessary. Yi directs what remains.

Protecting your energy is not withdrawing from life. It is becoming more discerning about where your effort goes, so that more of you remains available for what is meaningful, life-giving and true.

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Reflecting on Last Week's Practice

Discover What Is Still Possible

Last week, we explored Discover What Is Still Possible. Through There's More to Explore, a gentle Tai Chi push-and-return, and the published blog and Insights & Practice edition, the invitation was to work with the body as it is today while remaining curious about what may still develop.

We considered how changing range, support, effort or approach can create room for purposeful movement without forcing a result. Capability did not have to look exactly as it once did in order to retain meaning.

What would you like to feel more able to do?

That enquiry continues this week, but with a different emphasis. If possibility is to grow, what deserves protecting? Which commitments deserve your attention, and which patterns are consuming effort without helping you move towards what matters?

Week 24 explored possibility. Week 25 asks what is worth protecting your attention and effort for.

Possibility needs somewhere to land

It is difficult to develop a new capacity when attention is continually pulled away before learning has time to settle. Protecting energy may therefore mean creating a small, repeatable place for what you want to become more able to do.

That place might be ten attentive minutes, a booked class, a protected walk, a necessary conversation or a period of recovery. The size matters less than the sincerity of the choice. Possibility grows through conditions that allow it to be revisited.

What would you like to keep making room for?

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Song and Yi

Release what is unnecessary, direct what remains

Song is not collapse

Song is often translated as relaxation, but that word can be misleading. In practice, Song does not mean becoming floppy, passive or disconnected. It means releasing effort that is not required while retaining support, relationship and readiness.

If the shoulders are working harder than the movement requires, Song does not ask us to abandon the movement. It asks whether some of that holding can soften while the structure remains. This is a practical kind of economy: enough effort for the task, without paying for it twice through unnecessary tension.

Yi gives direction

Yi concerns attention, intention and purposeful direction. A hand movement changes when we know where it is going. A day can also change when we decide what deserves the clearest part of our attention.

> **Song releases what is unnecessary. Yi directs what remains.**

Together, these principles offer more than a movement instruction. They suggest a way to meet ordinary life. We can reduce effort that is no longer useful, then direct ourselves towards one conversation, task, boundary, period of recovery or act of care that matters.

The aim is not perfect efficiency. Human beings need rest, play, reflection and relationships as well as achievement. The enquiry is whether our effort expresses our values, or whether habit and fear are deciding for us.

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A Practical Sequence for Discernment

Notice, release, choose, direct

1. Notice

Begin with what is already happening. Where is attention scattering? Where is the body bracing? What are you continuing to carry because you have not paused long enough to question it?

2. Release

Let go of one degree of unnecessary effort. This is not a command to relax completely. It is a careful reduction, small enough that support and clarity remain.

3. Choose

Ask what matters in this moment. Not everything important can be done at once. Choice gives shape to attention and may include deciding what can wait, what needs a boundary and what requires recovery before action.

4. Direct

Bring Yi to one purposeful action. In practice it may be a clear palm direction or controlled weight shift. In daily life it may be writing the first paragraph, making the call or giving someone your undivided attention.

> **You may not be short of effort. You may be spending effort in too many places.**

Discernment turns energy protection from an abstract idea into a living skill. We do not need to become indifferent. We learn to care with direction.

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Practise and Explorations This Week

Cloud Hands into Double Push: Song and Yi

Move within a comfortable range. Explore how Song helps release unnecessary effort, while Yi gives the movement a clear direction.

BEGIN WITH CLOUD HANDS

Move gently from side to side. Let the body carry the arms and notice where unnecessary effort appears.

EXPLORE SONG

Keep the movement flowing while releasing effort you do not need. Stay supported without becoming tense.

CHANGE DIRECTION

Allow Cloud Hands to gradually become a Double Push. Let the transition happen smoothly rather than adding more force.

DIRECT WITH YI

As both palms move forward, give the movement a clear direction. Let attention, intention and movement travel together.

> **Release what is unnecessary. Direct what matters.**

REFLECTION

> **Where am I wasting effort, and where do I need clearer direction?**

WATCH AND READ

Watch this week's Apex Tai Chi teaching

Read: Discover Why Not Everything Deserves Your Energy

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Why This Matters in Daily Life

Moving from constant effort to purposeful action

Scattered attention can make every demand feel equally urgent. We switch tasks, rehearse conversations, monitor other people's reactions and keep the body prepared for problems that may never arrive. The result can be a great deal of effort with very little sense of completion.

Song offers a pause in that cycle. We notice the physical cost of carrying everything at once and release what is not needed for the present action. Yi then asks where attention should go. This is how a movement principle becomes a daily-life principle.

Protecting energy may mean finishing one meaningful task before opening another. It may mean allowing a message to wait, saying no without hostility, resting before exhaustion decides for you, or giving full attention to a person instead of half-attending to five concerns.

From fear-led bracing to congruent action

Fear can contain useful information, but it does not need to direct every movement. When we feel the feet, allow the breath to remain natural and choose one proportionate action, we create a little room between an alarm and our response.

Congruence grows when the body is not saying one thing, our values another and our actions a third. Practice cannot make life perfectly coherent, but it can help us recognise fragmentation earlier and return to what we mean to embody.

> **Protecting your energy is not doing less for the sake of it. It is choosing where your effort can become meaningful.**

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Stress, Cortisol and the Body

What the evidence can and cannot tell us

Cortisol is not an enemy. It is part of the body's normal stress response and helps us mobilise when something requires action. Short-term stress responses can be adaptive. The concern is not one demanding day or one difficult feeling.

Research reviews describe how persistent psychological stress can alter communication between the brain, endocrine system and immune system. Over time, stress-related signalling may become dysregulated, but responses differ between people. This does not mean that stress automatically causes illness, or that a single practice can control cortisol or immunity.

Tai Chi and Qigong are not immune treatments. They do, however, give us structured opportunities for gentle movement, breath awareness, attention and the reduction of unnecessary muscular effort. Movement also supports ordinary circulation. The useful claim is modest: practice can become one part of a wider approach to managing stress and caring for health.

If stress, anxiety, fatigue or physical symptoms are persistent or affecting daily life, seek appropriate professional support. Practice should sit alongside, not replace, suitable medical or psychological care.

A thought for this Thursday

This Thursday's YouTube teaching, Why Protecting Your Energy Is a Skill, will explore useful effort, unnecessary effort and why clear direction can matter more than constant pushing. I will share how release can remain active and purposeful rather than becoming withdrawal.

Review: Immunology of Stress

Review: Effects of Stress on Immune Function

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What We Feed, We Become

Cook Once, Protect Tomorrow



Protecting energy can begin before a demanding day arrives. Preparing several portions of one nourishing meal can reduce tomorrow's decisions, protect time and make it easier to eat well when attention is already stretched.

This Chinese-inspired ginger, mushroom, tofu and greens soup is warming, practical and easy to adapt. It is not presented as medicinal food therapy. It is simply a balanced autumn meal built from vegetables, protein and an optional wholegrain carbohydrate.

A varied diet supports health more reliably than any single ingredient. Nutrients such as protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron and zinc contribute to normal body functions, including normal immune function where relevant. No soup can prevent infection or guarantee an immune response.

> **One thoughtful preparation today can protect time and attention tomorrow.**

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Cook Once, Protect Tomorrow

A warming, practical autumn recipe

CHINESE-INSPIRED GINGER, MUSHROOM, TOFU AND GREENS SOUP

Makes 4 portions | About 35 minutes

Ingredients

1 tbsp rapeseed oil; 20 g fresh ginger; 2 garlic cloves; 250 g sliced mushrooms; 1 litre reduced-salt vegetable stock; 300 g cubed firm tofu; 2 pak choi or 200 g leafy greens; 4 spring onions; 1 tbsp reduced-salt soy sauce or tamari; 1 tsp toasted sesame oil; optional cooked wholegrain noodles or brown rice; lime or rice vinegar.

Method

1. Gently cook the ginger, garlic and mushrooms in the oil for 5 minutes. 2. Add the stock and simmer for 10 minutes. 3. Add the tofu, greens and optional noodles or rice. Simmer until tender and piping hot. 4. Stir in the soy sauce and sesame oil. Finish with spring onion and lime or rice vinegar.

Make tomorrow easier

Cool extra portions promptly and refrigerate within two hours. Use within 48 hours or freeze. Reheat only once, until steaming hot throughout.

Allergens and adaptations

Contains soya and sesame. Soy sauce and some noodles contain gluten. Check stock labels and choose ingredients suitable for your allergies, needs and tolerance.

Nourishment note: tofu provides protein; mushrooms and greens add variety, fibre and micronutrients. Wholegrain noodles or brown rice make the meal more substantial. Exact nutrition varies by brand and portion.

Sources: NHS Eatwell Guide | Food Standards Agency

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Key Principles to Reflect On

1. Song | Release Without Losing Direction

> **"When issuing power, remain settled, Song and still, concentrating in one direction."**

SOURCE

The Mental Elucidation of the Thirteen Postures, transmitted Taijiquan classical text, n.d.

NOTE

What is striking here is that Song and direction appear in the same instruction. Song is not an end in itself. The practitioner releases unnecessary tension while remaining supported, organised and clearly directed.

This gives Song a more demanding meaning than simply relaxation. The question is not how little effort we can use, but whether we can stop wasting effort without losing purpose.

This is what we explore as Cloud Hands changes into Double Push: can clearer direction emerge without unnecessary tension returning?

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Key Principles to Reflect On

2. Yi | Intention Comes First

“Intention comes first; the body follows.”

SOURCE

The Mental Elucidation of the Thirteen Postures, transmitted Taijiquan classical text, n.d.

NOTE

This short line points to something fundamental in Tai Chi: movement begins before visible movement. Yi is not simply thinking about an action or concentrating harder. It is the inner orientation that gives an action direction before it is physically expressed.

When intention becomes clear, the body begins to organise around where the movement is going. This matters beyond technique. We are constantly organising ourselves towards something through what receives our attention, effort and action.

Intention does more than influence what we do. It influences the direction in which we repeatedly give ourselves.

What am I organising myself towards?

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Key Principles to Reflect On

3. Discernment | Knowing When to Stop

> **“Know when enough is enough; know when to stop, and you can endure.”**

SOURCE

Laozi. Daodejing, Chapter 44.

NOTE

This is not simply an instruction to do less. Knowing when to stop requires discernment. The wider passage asks us to consider what we value and what our pursuit of things may cost us.

The issue, then, is not effort itself, but whether continued effort still serves something worth giving ourselves to. That makes this particularly relevant to Protecting Your Energy for What Matters.

> **Sometimes the skill is not finding more energy to continue. It is recognising when something has received enough of you.**

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Practise With Guidance This Week

A class provides a practical place to explore Song, Yi, weight transfer and purposeful direction with guidance. Choose a suitable session and book in advance through the current public-sessions page.



Click the poster or button for current details. Advance booking is required.

VIEW PUBLIC SESSIONS AND BOOK

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Apex Tai Chi Complete Membership

£35 PER MONTH | ONE MEMBERSHIP, DIFFERENT WAYS TO KEEP PRACTISING

IN PERSON

Come to class.

Unlimited attendance at regular public in-person Apex classes in Swansea, with no additional class charge. Book your place; availability and any session eligibility still apply.

LIVE ONLINE

Join from home.

Monday's Authentic Tai Chi: The Present Moment and Wednesday's Centering: Harmony of Yin & Yang bring live teaching into your week. Both are available through membership or pay as you go in the booking portal.

FRIDAY STILLNESS GATE

Make space to pause.

Join Friday's guided Daoist meditation: a regular invitation to settle into stillness and attentive practice.

RECORDINGS & NOTES

Revisit in your time.

Return to available approved recordings and accompanying practice notes in the portal. Availability varies; a recording is not promised for every session.

PRACTICE LIBRARY

Find your way back.

Relevant collections keep available practices together, so you can revisit a theme without having to remember where you found it.

MIND, BODY & QI

A space of your own.

Find guidance and resources assigned to your individual membership, alongside the shared library.

EXPLORE APEX TAI CHI COMPLETE MEMBERSHIP

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The Friday Stillness Gate

FRIDAY ONLINE DAOIST MEDITATION



Stillness can help us notice what has been consuming attention before we decide what to carry forward.

The Friday Stillness Gate is a 45-minute online Daoist meditation practice exploring body, breath, mind and Qi. It offers a quieter context for observing effort and allowing attention to gather without forcing a particular state.

Fridays, 7:00 to 7:45 pm UK time. Optional contribution for non-members. No fixed fee. Complimentary access is included for Complete Members.

LISTEN TO THE STILLNESS GATE MESSAGE

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Closing Reflection

Where focus goes, Qi flows

The week began with a familiar experience: giving so much attention to everything that too little remains for what matters most. The answer is not indifference, and it is not another demand to optimise every moment.

Song invites us to release what is unnecessary without losing structure. Yi invites us to direct what remains. Together they give us a way to move from automatic bracing towards purposeful participation.

Fear may still visit. Difficulties may remain. Acceptance does not ask us to pretend otherwise. It gives us firmer ground from which to decide what deserves action, what requires support and what can be allowed to pass without taking the whole of us with it.

> **Not everything deserves the same amount of you.**

Before the week ends, choose one thing you want to protect your energy for. Let it be real and proportionate. Then take one purposeful step in its direction.

A closing practice for the week

Pause before one familiar transition: before opening your inbox, entering the house, beginning work or going to bed. Feel the support beneath you. Notice what you are carrying in the body and what your attention is already feeding.

Allow one unnecessary effort to soften. Name what matters next. Then move towards it without demanding that every other concern disappear first. This is not a perfect state to achieve. It is a direction you can return to.

If this newsletter raises a question, or you would like to tell me how your practice is developing, please get in touch. I am always glad to hear from you.

Wishing you a congruent, nourishing and purposeful week ahead.

Be well & remain curious,
Dr Jar ☐

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