APEX TAI CHI INSIGHTS & PRACTICE

5TH OCTOBER 2026 | WEEK 26

Change Your Energy, Change What Becomes Possible

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This Week's Apex Tai Chi Guidance

Change Your Energy, Change What Becomes Possible

Dear friends,

How much of the way you feel today did you consciously choose? Many of us begin the day tired, tense, stiff, mentally crowded or pulled towards other people's demands. Before we decide how to meet the day, the day can seem to have decided our state for us.

This week's intention is Change Your Energy, Change What Becomes Possible. It is not an instruction to force positivity, deny difficulty or pretend that circumstances do not matter. It is an invitation to explore whether posture, breath, movement, attention and intention can help us meet the same circumstances from a different place within ourselves.

> **What if changing your energy is not only about feeling better, but about becoming more available to the life that is trying to unfold through you?**

In this week's movement teaching, we return towards centre, gather attention at the lower dantian and work with a Tai Chi ball between the hands. We open and gather, allow breath and movement to cooperate, then give intention a direction. Can the quality of the moment change when body, breath and focus begin to move together?

Sometimes life changes because circumstances change. Sometimes it changes because we begin meeting the same circumstances from a different place within ourselves. When the body softens, the breath becomes easier and the mind is no longer feeding only fear, another possibility may become visible.

We may notice a different choice, conversation or direction. Perhaps, in becoming more aligned within ourselves, we also become more available to meaning, connection and something larger than our immediate habits and worries.

> **You may not control every circumstance, but you can often influence the state from which you meet it. Fear may still speak. It does not have to choose your direction.**

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Reflecting on Last Week's Practice

Protecting Your Energy for What Matters

Last week, we explored the difference between using effort and spending it everywhere. Cloud Hands moved towards Double Push as Song helped us release unnecessary effort and Yi gave the movement a clearer direction.

The enquiry was not simply whether we could do less. It was whether we could stop wasting effort without losing purpose. We considered what deserves our attention, when enough has been given and how protecting energy can leave more of us available for what genuinely matters.

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

Week 26 continues that enquiry from a new angle. Once we have noticed where our energy is going, can we also influence its quality? Can a tense beginning become a steadier one? Can scattered attention gather? Can fear remain present without deciding the next step?

From protection to possibility

Protecting energy creates space. This week, we explore what we might bring into that space: a more settled body, an easier breath, a clearer intention and one purposeful action.

A different state does not guarantee a different outcome. It may, however, change what we notice, the decision we make and the quality with which we begin.

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The State We Begin From

Energy is the quality from which we meet the moment

Energy can sound abstract, but its effects are often familiar. We know the difference between entering a conversation while braced and entering it while grounded. We know how a crowded mind changes the way we hear, and how fatigue can make a manageable demand feel much larger.

In Tai Chi and Qigong, we do not need to force ourselves into a cheerful state. We begin by recognising what is present. We feel the ground, notice the body, allow the breath to settle and release effort that is no longer helping.

> **The energy is not the destination. It is the quality from which we begin.**

State influences action

The state we inhabit can influence what we notice and how we respond. When we are agitated, the next action may become hurried or defensive. When we are more gathered, another option may become visible. This is not magical thinking. It is a practical enquiry into the conditions from which action arises.

A different state can lead to a different decision. A different decision can create a different direction. The shift may be quiet: making the call, taking the walk, asking for help, resting before exhaustion or beginning something we have delayed.

Positive without pretending

Hope becomes useful when it can live beside reality. We can acknowledge pain, uncertainty or limitation while remaining curious about what else may be available. Possibility is not a promise. It is a willingness to look again.

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A Daoist Pathway for Change

Return, gather, refine, direct, imagine, embody, act

RETURN

Come back to the body as it is now. Feel the feet or the support beneath you. Let the present moment become more tangible than the story running ahead of it.

GATHER

Allow attention to collect rather than chase every demand. The lower dantian offers a practical area of focus around the lower abdomen and centre of the body.

REFINE AND DIRECT

Use Song to release unnecessary effort and Yi to give attention a clear direction. Refining does not mean becoming perfect. It means noticing the quality you are bringing and making a conscious adjustment.

IMAGINE AND EMBODY

Let intention open a possibility before action. Then allow posture, breath and movement to express that intention in a grounded way. Imagination becomes useful when it begins to influence how we stand, move and choose.

ACT

Take one proportionate step. The practice is not complete because we felt something interesting. Its value becomes clearer when a more gathered state supports a wiser action.

Return. Gather. Raise the quality. Direct. Trust. Act.

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Practise and Explorations This Week

Gather, Expand and Return

Move comfortably. Make the movements smaller or practise while seated if needed. Keep the breath natural and do not force sensations of Qi.

WUJI: ARRIVE

Stand or sit comfortably. Feel your support and notice the quality of your present state without immediately trying to change it.

GATHER AT THE LOWER DANTIAN

Begin a gentle ball-rolling movement in front of the lower Dantian. Let attention gather towards the centre and notice what sensations naturally become clearer.

INNER AND OUTER RESPONSE

Let the movement gradually grow from the centre. Explore the relationship between the movement you express outwardly and the quality you experience within.

OPEN AND GATHER

Allow the movement to become larger. As you open, let body, breath and attention expand. As you gather, return towards the lower Dantian. From something as vast as the universe to something as small as a grain of dust.

GATHER AND RETURN

Gradually make the movement smaller and return to the lower Dantian. Become still and notice the quality of your state now.

> **Change the movement, breath and intention, then notice what becomes possible.**

WATCH THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Watch: Change Your Energy, Change What Becomes Possible

BLOG INSIGHTS LINK

Read: Change Your Energy, Change What Becomes Possible

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Why This Matters in Daily Life

A different state may make a different response available

We often try to solve life entirely at the level of thought. We tell ourselves to stop worrying, become confident, concentrate harder or finally take action. Yet the body may still be braced, the breath restricted and attention organised around threat.

Tai Chi and Qigong give us another place to begin. We can change stance, soften the shoulders, feel the ground, allow the breath to move and give attention one clear direction. None of this removes the real demands of life. It changes how we meet them.

Stress and anxiety

When fear is present, the practice is not to argue with it or pretend it has disappeared. The practice is to widen the field. Can the feet, breath and centre also be present? Can fear offer information without taking over direction?

Procrastination and confidence

A large imagined future can make action feel impossible. Returning to centre and choosing one purposeful step can reduce the distance between intention and behaviour. Confidence may grow after action, not always before it.

Health, relationships, creativity and joy

A more gathered state may support a kinder conversation, a steadier approach to movement, more room for creative thought or the ability to notice a moment of joy that mental crowding had obscured. These are possibilities to explore, not outcomes to promise.

> **If I meet this moment from a different state, might a different response become available?**

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A Thought for This Thursday

Why changing state can change what we notice

Every Thursday, Dr Jar shares a new teaching on YouTube that explores the deeper reason behind the week's intention. Monday gives us the practical HOW. Thursday helps us understand the WHY and connect the movement to ordinary life.

This Thursday, we will explore why a change in inner state may alter what becomes noticeable, how we respond and what action feels possible next. The focus is not on controlling reality through thought. It is on becoming more available to reality, with less automatic bracing and a clearer capacity to choose.

> **A different state can lead to a different decision. A different decision can create a different direction.**

Something to observe before Thursday

Choose one familiar transition: waking up, opening your inbox, entering work, returning home or preparing for sleep. Notice the state you bring into it. Then pause, feel your support, allow one unnecessary effort to soften and give your attention a clear direction.

Do not ask whether you transformed the whole day. Ask whether the next moment was met with a little more presence, choice or trust.

The sacred dimension

There are times when practice feels larger than self-improvement. As the noise settles, we may sense connection, meaning or mystery. We do not need to define it or force it. We can simply become more available to what life may be asking of us.

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What We Feed We Become

Nourishment is part of the practice



Choosing nourishing food is not about dietary purity. It is about refusing to let ultra-processed foods become the daily foundation of how we feed ourselves. These industrial formulations often contain refined ingredients, flavourings, colours, emulsifiers or sweeteners, with little intact food. Familiar examples include sugary drinks, packaged sweets, crisps, many snack bars, instant noodles and some ready meals [1]. This is different from useful processing such as freezing vegetables, canning beans or making plain yoghurt.

In Hall's controlled trial, people ate about 500 additional calories each day and gained weight on the ultra-processed diet [2]. In a 2025 UK trial, both diets followed healthy-eating guidance, yet participants lost more weight over eight weeks on the minimally processed diet: 2.06% compared with 1.05% [3]. Wider reviews associate greater ultra-processed food intake with cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and poorer mental health, but these associations do not prove that processing alone causes each condition [4].

Some products are deliberately formulated for intense sensory appeal and heavily marketed. Refined carbohydrates, added fats, flavour, texture, convenience and repeated habits can encourage cravings and addictive-like eating in some people. This does not mean everyone is addicted, or that every ultra-processed food has the same effect [5,6].

Begin practically. Reduce sugary drinks. Build satisfying meals around vegetables, beans, whole grains and a suitable protein. Keep nourishing snacks available, and notice whether hunger, tiredness or emotion is driving the urge to eat. In Apex Tai Chi, movement is only one part of cultivating mind, body and Qi. These studies did not measure Qi. From our teaching perspective, nourishment helps create steadier conditions in which attention, movement and intention can be gathered and directed towards what matters.

SELECTED REFERENCES

[1] Monteiro et al. (2019). Ultra-processed foods: what they are and how to identify them.
[2] Hall et al. (2019). Ultra-Processed Diets Cause Excess Calorie Intake and Weight Gain.
[3] Dicken et al. (2025). Ultraprocessed or minimally processed diets following healthy dietary guidelines.
[4] Lane et al. (2024). Ultra-processed food exposure and adverse health outcomes.
[5] Schulte, Avena and Gearhardt (2015). Which Foods May Be Addictive?
[6] Gearhardt, Brownell and Brandt (2026). From Tobacco to Ultraprocessed Food.

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Key Principles to Reflect On

1. Making Space | An Empty Room Fills with Light

“In the empty room, brightness arises.”

SOURCE

Zhuangzi, “In the World of Men” (Ren Jian Shi).

NOTE

The original passage appears within Zhuangzi's discussion of fasting of the heart-mind. Just before this image, the text speaks of becoming empty and receptive rather than meeting everything through fixed knowing; it then says, “In the empty room, brightness arises.”

What interests me here is that the brightness is not manufactured. The room does not produce light by trying harder. Its emptiness allows something previously obscured to become available.

That gives us a useful way to approach this week's practice. Changing our energy does not always mean adding something new. Sometimes we change the conditions: less holding, less scattering, more space, a different quality of attention.

Perhaps possibility does not always need to be created. Sometimes it needs space to appear.

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Key Principles to Reflect On

2. Turning the Light Around | Returning Attention

> **“When the light is not turned by things, the light returns of itself.”**

SOURCE

The Secret of the Golden Flower (Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi), Chapter 7, “The Living Method of Turning the Light Around.”

NOTE

In this text, “turning the light around” is not presented simply as withdrawing from ordinary life. The same passage says that when matters arise, we should respond to them; the practice is to prevent awareness from being continually carried away by what it encounters.

It even describes practising this “in daily life” and “in responding to affairs and meeting things.” That makes it particularly relevant to Qigong. Attention normally travels outward towards movement, people, tasks and stimulation. Practice gives us another possibility: attention can return.

This is why gathering towards the lower Dantian is more than finishing a movement. It changes the direction of attention from outward dispersal towards inward gathering.

> **Before we decide where to go next, we may first need to recover what has been scattered.**

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Key Principles to Reflect On

3. Return as Transformation | Reversal Is the Movement of the Dao

> **“Reversal is the movement of the Dao.”**

SOURCE

Laozi, Daodejing, Chapter 40.

NOTE

This extraordinarily short line challenges the assumption that development always means continuing further in the same direction. The movement of Dao includes return, reversal and transformation.

Classical commentary, including Wang Bi's, reads this “returning/reversal” through the interdependence of opposites rather than endless linear progression.

That has a direct connection with this week's practice. Energy can move outward and return inward. Movement can become stillness. Expansion can become gathering. A state that has developed in one direction does not necessarily have to continue indefinitely in that direction.

> **Perhaps this is the deeper meaning of Change Your Energy: change does not always require adding more momentum. Sometimes another possibility appears when the direction itself changes.**

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Practise With Guidance This Week

A guided class gives you space to explore posture, breath, attention and purposeful movement with support. 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 gives us a place to notice our state before habit chooses our direction.

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

Fridays, 7:00 to 7:45 pm UK time. Contribution based for non-members. Complimentary access is included for Complete Members.

This week's enquiry can continue in stillness: when the body stops adding unnecessary effort, what quality becomes easier to recognise?

JOIN THE FRIDAY STILLNESS GATE

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Closing Reflection

Choose the state from which you begin

This week began with a simple recognition: the state we start from is not necessarily the state we have to continue from. We may wake tired, meet tension, carry fear or feel pulled by demands. Practice does not ask us to deny any of this.

It asks whether we can return. Feel the support beneath us. Gather attention towards centre. Release what is unnecessary. Give intention a direction. Imagine another quality, embody it gently and let it support one purposeful action.

> **Fear may still speak. It does not have to choose your direction.**

The movement from Wuji towards a purposeful step is also a movement from reaction towards participation. We do not control every circumstance. We may have more influence over the state from which we meet it than we realised.

A closing enquiry

Before one important moment this week, pause. Ask: What quality of energy am I bringing towards what I want to change? Then choose one quality you wish to embody and one proportionate action that gives it expression.

Perhaps the sacred part is not that life gives us certainty. Perhaps it is that, even within uncertainty, we can become more present to meaning, relationship and the next honest step.

> **What could change in your life if you chose your energy before the demands of the day chose it for you?**

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 hopeful, grounded and purposeful week ahead.

Be well & remain curious,
Dr Jar ☐

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