FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Health & Fitness

A Tai Chi Imagery Workbook: Spirit, Intent, and Motion
Martin Mellish
Singing Dragon
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According to Martin Mellish, author, thirty-year tai chi teacher-practitioner, and mathematician, whether doing tai chi or moving through everyday life, "All of us practice twenty-four hours a day–the only question is *what* we are practicing." In this book, Mellish makes the case that imagery cultivates the "moving body-mind" far beyond the practice of tai chi.

Originally, tai chi, one of the Chinese martial arts, incorporated imagery to strengthen students' skills and build physical capacity. Post Cultural-Revolution tai chi does not include imagery, but Mellish learned from older teachers. He brings a sense of play to the underlying illustrated movements, while inviting body mindfulness, designed to tap into inner wisdom for building strength, flexibility, and balance. It's a process, advises the author, "of integrating imagery into one's movement and one's life… Allow the movement to follow the image rather than your conceptual thinking."

The Structure section sets the stage, with imagery focused on specific parts of the body and featuring practices relating to standing, the spine and alignment, shoulders, hands and arms, and being centered. What Mellish calls "the empty step" is one of the distinguishing features of tai chi. Its visual representation: "Walk like a cat." Other especially vivid imagery suggestions are "Stand like a mountain," and "Yawning Armpits."

The next part, Spirit, includes images relating to breathing, feeling and expression, letting go, and experiencing rhythm. An example of an exercise in letting go is imagining "moving underwater." "Rhythm" encourages the image of driving a car through curves, while one "feeling and expression" exercise commands, "Having deeply investigated what you are listening *to*, now try to find the place that you are listening *from*."

Part Three, Application, includes imagery on power and the physics of movement, as well as wisdom relating to the self and other through partner tai chi, which he calls "Push

Hands."

The book's two appendices provide information not readily available, including mathematical formulas underlying tai chi and scientific research summarizing its health benefits.

Some might argue against interconnections between movement, life, and health or question the need for another tai chi book. Indeed, these practices, illustrated and explained with humor and wisdom, create the potential for a powerful mind-body shift. Profound moments emerge in comments such as "Commitment does not mean increasing the force that is pulling you forward, but letting go of the force that is holding you back." These physical practices, combined with 124 black-and-white photographs and line drawings, bring such wisdom alive by igniting mindful movement in unexpected and everyday ways.

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