

tai chi balance exercises for seniors

The practice of tai chi balance exercises for seniors offers a profound pathway to enhanced physical and mental well-being, addressing common age-related challenges such as diminished stability, reduced mobility, and increased fall risk. This ancient Chinese art, characterized by its slow, deliberate movements and deep breathing, is not merely a form of exercise but a holistic discipline that cultivates mindfulness, strength, and resilience. By engaging in tai chi, older adults can significantly improve their proprioception, coordination, and confidence in daily activities, leading to a more independent and fulfilling life. This article will delve into the specific benefits, key movements, and considerations for seniors incorporating tai chi balance exercises into their routines.

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Understanding Tai Chi for Seniors

Tai chi, often described as "meditation in motion," is a gentle yet effective exercise system that has gained widespread recognition for its therapeutic benefits, particularly among the senior population. Its low-impact nature makes it accessible to individuals with varying physical capabilities, allowing them to build strength and improve flexibility without putting undue stress on their joints. The emphasis on slow, controlled movements, combined with focused breathing and mental concentration, helps to calm the nervous system and promote a sense of inner peace.

For seniors, the integration of tai chi into their lifestyle can be transformative. It addresses specific concerns like the fear of falling, which can lead to a sedentary lifestyle and further physical decline. By practicing tai chi, seniors learn to engage their core muscles, improve their posture, and develop a greater awareness of their body's position in space. This heightened body awareness is crucial for maintaining balance and preventing falls, which can have serious consequences for older adults.

The Science Behind Tai Chi and Balance

Research consistently demonstrates the efficacy of tai chi in improving balance and reducing fall incidence in older adults. Studies have explored the physiological mechanisms through which tai chi exerts its positive effects. One key area of focus is proprioception, the body's ability to sense its position, movement, and equilibrium. Tai chi exercises, by requiring precise weight shifts and controlled movements, actively stimulate and retrain the sensory receptors in the muscles, tendons, and joints, thereby enhancing proprioceptive feedback.

Furthermore, tai chi strengthens the muscles responsible for maintaining upright posture and stability. The slow, flowing movements engage the core muscles, legs, and ankles, building subtle yet significant strength over time. This muscular conditioning directly contributes to improved balance and a greater ability to react to sudden shifts in equilibrium. The cognitive benefits of tai chi also play a role; the mental focus required to perform the movements enhances attention and reaction times, both critical components of fall prevention.

Improved Proprioception and Kinesthetic Sense

Proprioception, often referred to as the "sixth sense," is fundamental to our ability to navigate our environment and maintain balance. As we age, this sensory input can become less acute. Tai chi movements, such as stepping forward, shifting weight, and turning, require constant adjustments and feedback from the body's sensory systems. Through consistent practice, seniors can retrain these systems, leading to a more refined ability to sense their body's position and movement, even in challenging situations.

Enhanced Muscular Strength and Endurance

While tai chi is known for its gentle nature, it effectively builds strength and endurance in key muscle groups. The sustained postures and repetitive, controlled movements engage muscles in the legs, core, and back, which are vital for stability. This gradual strengthening helps to improve gait, reduce fatigue, and increase the ability to recover from a loss of balance, thereby directly contributing to fall prevention. The focus is on functional strength, which translates directly to improved performance in everyday activities.

Cognitive Benefits and Fall Prevention

The intricate sequences and mindful attention required in tai chi foster significant cognitive benefits. This practice demands concentration, memory, and the ability to integrate sensory information to execute movements. Improved cognitive function, including enhanced attention and reaction time, has been directly linked to a reduced risk of falls. When seniors can better process information and react more quickly to destabilizing forces, they are less likely to experience a fall.

Key Tai Chi Balance Exercises for Seniors

Several fundamental tai chi movements are particularly effective for improving balance in seniors. These exercises focus on controlled weight shifting, leg strength, and body awareness. It is important to approach these movements with proper instruction and to modify them as needed to suit individual capabilities. Practicing in a safe environment, perhaps with a chair nearby for support, is always recommended.

The Basic Stance

The basic stance, also known as Wu Ji stance, is the foundation of many tai chi movements. It involves standing with feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, and arms relaxed at the sides. This posture promotes grounding and a sense of rootedness, essential for stability. Holding this stance and focusing on even weight distribution can help seniors develop an initial sense of balance and body awareness.

Weight Shifting Exercises

Weight shifting is a cornerstone of tai chi balance. Movements like "Parting the Wild Horse's Mane" or "White Crane Spreads its Wings" involve smoothly transferring weight from one leg to the other. These exercises improve control over the center of gravity, enhance coordination, and build strength in the supporting leg. The gradual nature of the shift allows for practice and refinement of balance.

Single Leg Stance and Variations

The single leg stance, where one foot is slightly lifted off the ground, is a more advanced balance exercise within tai chi. For seniors, this can be adapted by starting with a very slight lift or by holding onto a support. As balance improves, the lift can be increased, and the duration of the stance extended. This directly challenges and strengthens the muscles responsible for maintaining equilibrium on one leg.

Tai Chi Step Variations

Different stepping patterns are integral to tai chi. Exercises like the "Forward Step" or "Backward Step" involve precise foot placement and coordinated weight transfer. These movements improve gait stability, teach seniors how to move efficiently and safely, and enhance their ability to navigate uneven surfaces. The deliberate nature of these steps allows for conscious control and learning.

Arm Movements and Balance Integration

While seemingly focused on the arms, tai chi arm movements are intricately linked to balance. The coordinated motion of the arms helps to counterbalance the body's weight shifts and maintain overall stability. For instance, raising an arm while shifting weight requires the body to make subtle adjustments to stay upright. This integration of upper and lower body movement is a key aspect of tai chi's effectiveness.

Adapting Tai Chi for Different Senior Needs

Recognizing that seniors have diverse physical abilities and health conditions is crucial when introducing tai chi. Adaptations can be made to ensure the practice is safe, accessible, and beneficial for everyone. Consulting with a healthcare professional before beginning any new exercise program is always advisable, especially for individuals with pre-existing medical conditions.

Seated Tai Chi

For seniors with significant mobility limitations, or those who find standing for extended periods challenging, seated tai chi offers a valuable alternative. Many tai chi movements can be modified to be performed while sitting in a chair. This allows individuals to still experience the benefits of tai chi, such as improved circulation, stress reduction, and enhanced upper body coordination, without the demands of weight-bearing exercises.

Using Support

For those who are beginning their tai chi journey or are working on improving their standing balance, using support is an excellent strategy. A sturdy chair or a wall can provide a sense of security and allow individuals to focus on the form and weight transfer without the constant fear of falling. As confidence and balance improve, the reliance on support can gradually be reduced.

Modifying Range of Motion

Not all seniors have the same range of motion in their joints. Tai chi movements can be adapted by reducing the depth of stances or the extent of arm movements. The emphasis is on performing the movements correctly and with intention, rather than on achieving a full range of motion. A qualified tai chi instructor can guide seniors on how to appropriately modify movements to suit their individual capabilities.

Focusing on Fundamentals

For some seniors, particularly those new to tai chi or experiencing significant balance issues, focusing on the most fundamental elements is key. This might involve practicing basic stances, simple weight shifts, and coordinated breathing exercises. Mastery of these foundational elements will build the confidence and physical foundation necessary to progress to more complex movements.

Getting Started with Tai Chi Balance Exercises

Embarking on a tai chi practice for balance improvement is a rewarding endeavor. The key to success lies in finding qualified instruction, starting slowly, and maintaining consistency. These principles will help ensure a safe and effective learning experience.

Finding a Qualified Instructor

The most effective way to learn tai chi is from a certified and experienced instructor who has a background in teaching tai chi to seniors. A good instructor will understand the specific needs and limitations of older adults, be able to provide clear demonstrations, offer personalized modifications, and create a supportive learning environment. Look for instructors with certifications from reputable tai chi organizations.

Starting Slowly and Gradually Increasing Intensity

It is essential to begin with introductory classes that focus on the basic forms and principles of tai chi. Avoid overexertion in the initial stages. As your body becomes accustomed to the movements and your balance improves, you can gradually increase the duration, complexity, and intensity of your practice. Listening to your body and taking breaks when needed is paramount.

Consistency is Key

Like any exercise program, the benefits of tai chi are most realized through regular and consistent practice. Aim for several sessions per week, even if they are shorter. Even 15-20 minutes of dedicated practice a few times a week can make a significant difference in improving balance, coordination, and overall well-being. Finding a schedule that works for you and sticking to it will yield the best results.

Creating a Safe Practice Environment

Ensure your practice space is safe and free of hazards. Clear away any clutter that could cause a trip or fall. Wear comfortable, non-slip shoes. If practicing at home, consider practicing near a wall or sturdy furniture that you can use for support if needed. Practicing in a well-lit area is also important.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How often should seniors practice tai chi for balance exercises?

A: For optimal results, seniors should aim to practice tai chi balance exercises at least 2-3 times per week. Consistency is more important than intensity, especially when starting out. Shorter, more frequent sessions can be very effective.

Q: Can tai chi help with conditions like arthritis?

A: Yes, tai chi is often recommended for individuals with arthritis. The gentle, flowing movements can help improve joint flexibility and reduce stiffness and pain without causing further damage to the joints. It's always advisable to consult with a doctor or physical therapist before starting any new exercise program if you have arthritis.

Q: What are the signs that my balance is improving with tai chi?

A: Signs of improved balance include feeling more stable when standing and walking, reduced fear of falling, increased confidence in performing daily activities, better coordination, and the ability to hold challenging poses for longer periods.

Q: Do I need special equipment to practice tai chi for balance?

A: No, special equipment is generally not required for tai chi. Comfortable clothing that allows for free movement and supportive, non-slip shoes are recommended. Some individuals may choose to use a chair for support when starting out.

Q: How long does it take to see improvements in balance from tai chi?

A: Improvements can vary from person to person, but many seniors begin to notice subtle changes within a few weeks of consistent practice. Significant improvements in balance and a reduction in fall risk are typically observed after several months of regular tai chi engagement.

Q: Is tai chi too slow-paced for seniors who are physically active?

A: Tai chi's slow pace is intentional, allowing for precise control, mindfulness, and deep engagement of muscles. Even physically active seniors can benefit greatly from the balance and coordination aspects, as well as the stress-reducing benefits of the mindful movements. Advanced forms and faster sequences exist, but the foundation of slow, deliberate movement remains crucial for balance.

Q: Can tai chi help with dizziness or vertigo?

A: While tai chi can improve overall stability and body awareness, which may indirectly help with dizziness, it is not a primary treatment for vertigo or severe dizziness. Individuals experiencing these symptoms should consult with a healthcare professional for diagnosis and appropriate treatment. However, improved balance and confidence gained from tai chi can reduce the impact of dizziness when it occurs.

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Senior's Tai Chi Workout - the first Tai Chi workout book designed especially for seniors that's easy to follow and provides a complete workout in 15 minutes.

tai chi balance exercises for seniors: The Comprehensive Manual of Therapeutic Exercises Elizabeth Bryan, 2024-06-01 Therapeutic exercises can be found spread out amongst numerous texts, handouts, card boxes, and websites, which has sent clinicians, practitioners, and trainers searching for reliable, evidence-based exercises for the entire body, all packaged into a single, all-inclusive manual. To that end, The Comprehensive Manual of Therapeutic Exercises: Orthopedic and General Conditions was written as a fundamental resource on exercise theory and techniques, and as a comprehensive guide for designing exercise programs. Dr. Elizabeth Bryan has compiled thousands of clinically relevant exercises to create a text that will teach students theory and proper application that they will then return to again and again in their career as a reference to aid in designing evidence-based exercise programs for their clients or patients. Introductory chapters cover exercise parameters, exercise progression, the importance of form, muscle soreness, and a reference for body position terminology, then subsequent chapters are organized by body area to cover most of the clinical exercises in use today. Each exercise includes photographs, a list of muscle systems that will be affected, specific substitutions to look for, and detailed instructions directed at students and clinicians. Also included are sections devoted to protocols and specialty exercises including yoga and tai chi. Embracing the principles of evidence-based practice, "Where's the Evidence?" boxes are prominently featured throughout the text to support the exercises and theory with up-to-date, relevant, sufficient, valid, and reliable studies. Combining theory with practice, The Comprehensive Manual of Therapeutic Exercises: Orthopedic and General Conditions is an essential tool for students as well as clinicians, practitioners, or trainers to find the most appropriate exercises for their client's or patient's needs and apply them properly.

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Offering a comprehensive look at physical therapy science and practice, Guccione's Geriatric Physical Therapy, 4th Edition is a perfect resource for both students and practitioners alike. Year after year, this text is recommended as the primary preparatory resource for the Geriatric Physical Therapy Specialization exam. And this new fourth edition only gets better. Content is thoroughly revised to keep you up to date on the latest geriatric physical therapy protocols and conditions. Five new chapters are added to this edition to help you learn how to better manage common orthopedic,

cardiopulmonary, and neurologic conditions; become familiar with functional outcomes and assessments; and better understand the psychosocial aspects of aging. In all, you can rely on Guccione's Geriatric Physical Therapy to help you effectively care for today's aging patient population. - Comprehensive coverage of geriatric physical therapy prepares students and clinicians to provide thoughtful, evidence-based care for aging patients. - Combination of foundational knowledge and clinically relevant information provides a meaningful background in how to effectively manage geriatric disorders - Updated information reflects the most recent and relevant information on the Geriatric Clinical Specialty Exam. - Standard APTA terminology prepares students for terms they will hear in practice. - Expert authorship ensures all information is authoritative, current, and clinically accurate. - NEW! Thoroughly revised and updated content across all chapters keeps students up to date with the latest geriatric physical therapy protocols and conditions. - NEW! References located at the end of each chapter point students toward credible external sources for further information. - NEW! Treatment chapters guide students in managing common conditions in orthopedics, cardiopulmonary, and neurology. - NEW! Chapter on functional outcomes and assessment lists relevant scores for the most frequently used tests. - NEW! Chapter on psychosocial aspects of aging provides a well-rounded view of the social and mental conditions commonly affecting geriatric patients. - NEW! Chapter on frailty covers a wide variety of interventions to optimize treatment. - NEW! Enhanced eBook version is included with print purchase, allowing students to access all of the text, figures, and references from the book on a variety of devices.

tai chi balance exercises for seniors: Health Promotion and Aging David Haber, 2016-03-28
The seventh edition of this classic text champions healthy aging by demonstrating how to prevent or manage disease and make large-scale improvements toward health and wellness in the older adult population. The text synthesizes state-of-the-art research findings—providing convincing evidence that health promotion truly works—with practical, effective strategies. Encompassing important research results that supplant prior recommendations, this new edition provides updated best practices and strategies to ensure the active participation of older adults in all aspects of life. Completely reorganized for ease of use, this textbook features updated demographics and rankings for leading causes of death, new blood pressure screening guidelines and data on obesity and diabetes, updated exercise regimens, older-driver statistics and innovations such as the driverless car, cautions regarding ineffective brain-training programs, and more. Highly practical, the text includes health-promoting tools, resource lists, assessment tools, illustrations, checklists, and tables. Additionally, the book includes key terms and learning objectives at the start of each chapter, along with thought-provoking questions and reflection boxes. An Instructor's Manual and PowerPoint slides are available to facilitate teaching. New to the Seventh Edition: Provides updated blood pressure, cholesterol, Ductal Carcinoma In Situ (DCIS), and lung cancer screening guidelines Presents updates on exercise regimens ranging from yoga to the tango Expands and updates section on emotional regulation and conflict resolution skills with aging Discusses Boomer Entrepreneurism Provides new policy recommendations including student loan debt among older adults Expands gerotechnology and smart home innovations Updates on "Obamacare" and health care delivery recommendations Addresses "Buyer Beware" regarding brain-training programs Expands global aging and LGBT aging content

tai chi balance exercises for seniors: Ebersole & Hess' Toward Healthy Aging E-Book
Theris A. Touhy, Kathleen F Jett, 2019-08-24 Ensure you thoroughly understand the intricate details of providing effective care for adults as they age. Ebersole & Hess' Toward Healthy Aging, 10th Edition is the only comprehensive gerontological nursing text that effectively communicates how to provide holistic care, promote healthy lives, and address end-of-life issues and concerns. Grounded in the core competencies recommended by the AACN in collaboration with the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing, the tenth edition has been extensively revised and updated with shorter, more streamlined chapters and pedagogical features to facilitate learning. It covers the areas of safety and ethical considerations, genetics, communication with the patient and caregiver, promoting

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tai chi balance exercises for seniors: Encyclopedia of Lifestyle Medicine and Health James M. Rippe, 2012-02-14 These three volumes sort out the science behind nightly news reports and magazine cover stories, and help define the interdisciplinary field of lifestyle medicine and health.

tai chi balance exercises for seniors: Healthy Aging Secrets: Tips for Thriving in Later Life Bev Hill, Healthy Aging Secrets: Tips for Thriving in Later Life is an invaluable resource for anyone seeking to embrace the aging process with grace and vitality. This comprehensive guide delves into the science of aging, offering practical advice on nutrition, physical fitness, mental health, social connections, preventive healthcare, financial planning, and more. With chapters dedicated to managing common health issues, engaging in fulfilling leisure activities, and finding purpose in later life, this book empowers readers to lead healthy, active, and meaningful lives. Whether you are an older adult, a caregiver, or simply interested in preparing for the future, this book provides the tools and insights needed to thrive in later life.

tai chi balance exercises for seniors: Exercise for Aging Adults Gail M. Sullivan, Alice K. Pomidor, 2015-08-10 This book translates the new findings in exercise research for the elderly for busy practitioners, trainees, students and administrators. This book provides practical strategies that can be implemented immediately in the common settings in which practitioners care for adults. The format includes key points and case examples which showcase the strong evidence supporting exercise by older adults as a key tool to enhance health, prevent serious outcomes, such as hospitalization and functional loss, and as part of the treatment plan for diseases that are common in older adults. Written by experts in the field of exercise in older persons, this book is a guide to maintaining quality of life and functional independence from frail to healthy aging adults. Strategies and exercises are discussed for specific care settings and illustrated via links to video examples, to ensure readers can immediately apply described techniques. Exercise for Aging Adults: A Guide for Practitioners is a useful tool for physicians, residents in training, medical students, physical therapists, gerontology advance practice nurse practitioners, assisted living facility administrators, directors of recreation, and long-term care directors.

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new chapter, Exercise Prescription, highlights evidence-based exercise prescription and the role of physical activity and exercise on the aging process. A new chapter, Older Adults and Their Families, helps physical therapists understand the role spouses/partners and adult children can play in rehabilitation, from providing emotional support to assisting with exercise programs and other daily living activities. New chapters on Impaired Joint Mobility, Impaired Motor Control, Home-based Service Delivery, and Hospice and End of Life expand coverage of established and emerging topics in physical therapy. Incorporates two conceptual models: the Guide to Physical Therapist Practice, 2nd Edition, and the International Classification of Function, Disability, and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organization (WHO) with an emphasis on enabling function and enhancing participation rather than concentrating on dysfunction and disability. A companion Evolve website includes all references linked to MEDLINE as well as helpful links to other relevant websites.

tai chi balance exercises for seniors: ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription Gary Liguori, American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), 2020-12-03 The flagship title from the prestigious American College of Sports Medicine, this critical handbook delivers scientifically based, evidence-informed standards to prepare you for success. Providing succinct summaries of recommended procedures for exercise testing and exercise prescription in healthy and diseased patients, this trusted manual is an essential resource for all exercise professionals, as well as other health professionals who may counsel patients on exercise including physicians, nurses, physician's assistants, physical and occupational therapists, dietitians, and health care administrators. The extensively updated eleventh edition has been reorganized for greater clarity and integrates the latest Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

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tai chi balance exercises for seniors: Advanced Fitness Assessment and Exercise Prescription Vivian H. Heyward, Ann L. Gibson, 2018-09-27 Advanced Fitness Assessment and Exercise Prescription, Seventh Edition With Online Video, provides a comprehensive approach to physical fitness appraisal and exercise prescription. The text bridges the gap between research and practice and synthesizes concepts and theories from exercise physiology, kinesiology, measurement, psychology, and nutrition to provide a clearly defined approach to physical fitness testing and the design of individualized exercise programs. The accompanying online videos enhance the learning experience and teach the techniques necessary for conducting fitness testing and program design. More than 40 clips featuring common exercise assessments will help users learn essentials of fitness testing, such as calibration of blood pressure cuffs, functional movement assessment, and push-up and pull-up testing. Unlike introductory texts, which typically focus on field testing for evaluating physical fitness, this text includes both field and laboratory assessment techniques. Readers will find the latest information on maximal and submaximal graded exercise testing in healthy populations, muscular fitness testing protocols and norms for children and adults, and field tests and norms for evaluating cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular fitness, body composition, flexibility, and balance. The seventh edition of Advanced Fitness Assessment and Exercise Prescription reflects current guidelines and recommendations, including new physical activity recommendations from the U.S. government, American Heart Association, and American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), as well as the latest ACSM guidelines for medical exam and exercise testing requirements before beginning exercise programs. Additional updates to the seventh edition include the following: • New research

substantiating the link between physical activity and disease risk • Expanded information on prediabetes, metabolic syndrome, osteoporosis, and overweight and obesity, including updated statistics on the global prevalence of obesity • New dietary guidelines for Americans, including information on MyPlate • Inclusion of SCORE system to estimate 10-year risk of fatal cardiac event due to atherosclerosis • Expanded information on the use of technology to monitor physical activity • Updated information on the use of exergaming and social networking to promote physical activity and exercise • Additional OMNI pictorial scales for ratings of perceived exertion during exercise • Latest ACSM FITT-VP principle for designing aerobic exercise programs • Whole-body vibration as an adjunct to resistance training and flexibility training

Advanced Fitness Assessment and Exercise Prescription, Seventh Edition, is organized around physical fitness components, providing information on assessment followed by guidelines for designing exercise programs to improve each fitness component. The text begins with an overview of physical activity, health, and chronic disease, followed by discussion of preliminary health screening and risk classification, including the principles of fitness assessment, exercise prescription, and exercise program design. The remainder of the text provides in-depth coverage of assessment and exercise prescription for each of five physical fitness components: cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular fitness (strength, endurance, and power), body composition, flexibility, and balance. In each chapter, key questions help readers focus on essential information. Key points, review questions, and key terms reinforce concepts and summarize chapter content. An instructor guide, test package, chapter quizzes, and presentation package plus image bank provide tools for lecture preparation, creative content delivery, and class assessment. New to the seventh edition are online video clips for both students and instructors to further aid comprehension of the text and provide an additional tool for classroom demonstration. By integrating the latest research, recommendations, and information into guidelines for application, **Advanced Fitness Assessment and Exercise Prescription, Seventh Edition**, bridges the gap between research and practice for fitness professionals. Its unique scope, depth of coverage, and clearly outlined approach make it a valuable resource for students and exercise science professionals who want to increase their knowledge, skill, and competence in assessing clients' fitness and designing individualized exercise programs.

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tai chi balance exercises for seniors: Exercise to Prevent and Manage Chronic Disease Across the Lifespan Jack Feehan, Nicholas Tripodi, Vasso Apostolopoulos, 2022-04-30 **Exercise to Prevent and Manage Chronic Disease Across the Lifespan** provides evidence-based insights into the clinical utility of exercise in the management of disease across a broad range of specialties and diseases. The book offers research informed strategies for the integration of exercise into standard practice in fields such as neurology, endocrinology, psychiatry and oncology, as well as decision-making pathways and clinical scenarios to advance patient care. The book is divided by specialty and includes clinical scenarios to allow for the integration of information within practice. The book's synthesized research evidence allows practitioners to safely and effectively begin to capitalize on the benefits of exercise in their patients. - Provides broad insights into the evidence-based underpinnings of the use of exercise in a range of common diseases - Coverage

includes the immune system, musculoskeletal disease, oncology, endocrinology, cardiology, respiratory diseases, and more - Includes a glossary, bibliography and summary figures for quick reference of information

tai chi balance exercises for seniors: Successful Cognitive and Emotional Aging Colin A. Depp, Dilip V. Jeste, 2009-08-28 The critical importance of brain health to the well-being of older adults is becoming increasingly clear. However, an important aspect that interests most people relates to what clinicians and their adult patients and family members can do to retain and even improve cognitive and emotional functioning as they age. *Successful Cognitive and Emotional Aging* thoroughly discusses the neuroscience of healthy aging and presents effective strategies for staying lively, engaged, and positive. The book is organized into three parts. The first one, focusing on behavioral and psychosocial aspects, strives to place cognitive aging in a broad context. With chapters that explore such topics as the meaning of wisdom, the role of spirituality in healthy aging, and what centenarians can teach us about cognition and emotion, this section sets the stage for a rich, robust, yet nuanced treatment of its subject. The second part addresses the biological aspects and presents the scientific foundations of cognitive aging, as well as reviews the research on the role of factors such as stress, resilience, and diet. Finally, the third section addresses prevention and intervention strategies in a practical, down-to-earth fashion, addressing questions such as What environments encourage physical activity? and How can we promote resilience? Several features of the book are especially noteworthy: The book bridges the gap between popular science for a lay audience and the heavily theoretical, academic approach of other books on the aging brain, making it suitable not only for clinicians but for their patients and family members as well. The fascinating story of an innovative intergenerational school makes the case for meaningful activity -- not just for the older participants but for the entire community -- and is suggestive of the plethora of possible programs that might prove effective at keeping the older population engaged and contributing. Results from a 70-year longitudinal study are extensively reviewed and identify the coping strategies that seem to bring about well-being in older age. The most promising strategies for successful aging, applicable to a large majority of the population, are summarized by the editors so that clinicians as well as consumers of healthcare may implement them as they see fit. As the baby boomers reach what used to be considered old age, the demand for evidence-based strategies for retaining and improving cognition will only increase. Fortunately, as the editors note, it is never too early or too late to start working toward the goal of improving brain health.

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