

**2026 TCQ Conference**

**Joseph B. Martin Conference Center @ Harvard Medical School**

**REAL LIFE IMPLEMENTATIONS  
OF QIGONG & TAI CHI PROGRAMS  
FOR CHILDREN**

**Adapted for Different Age Groups,  
Student Profiles and Special Needs**

**Dr. ADINA RIPOSAN-TAYLOR**



# PRESENTERS' INTRODUCTION

**ADINA RIPOSAN-TAYLOR, PhD**

**GEORGE TAYLOR (Senior High-School Student)**

**Satya Sattva Studio**

**<http://www.satyasattva.com/>**

# TCQ SCHOOLS & LINEAGES



## Adina's TCQ Certifications:

- IIQTC Certified Tai Chi and Qigong Teacher
- Wu Style Tai Chi and Qigong Certified Teacher

## Schools, Lineages & Collaborations:

- Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi (IIQTC) (Dr. Roger Janke)
- Nourishing Life (Chinese Tai Chi Master Yang Cheng Long)
- The Universal Tao (Grandmaster Mantak Chia)
- Tai Chi Society Mandarin, Jacksonville City, FL
- University of Notre Dame, IL (research collaboration)

# TCQ SCHOOLS & LINEAGES



## George Taylor: TCQ student, co-author, researcher

- George is a Senior High-School student
- Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, VA
- Computer Science Lab specialization
- Next: University of Manchester, UK

## TCQ experience: George attended TCQ as a child

- Neurodivergent student
- Qigong classes at an ASD-specialized pediatric clinic
- Qigong classes in the after-school program



Since 2013



# TCQ CHILDREN & YOUTH COURSES

## Priority:

To design adapted programs for specific contexts, e.g., a different approach.

## Rationale:

Different teaching methods can have different outcomes in different populations.

# AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS (AGES 5-14)



Satya Sattva Studio, Jacksonville City & Fernandina Beach, FL  
Amelia Island Montessori School, Fernandina Beach, FL



Different Age Groups  
require different approach:

- Primary through 5th Grade
  - Grades 1-3
  - Grades 4-5
- 6th Grade and higher

# NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS (ASD)






Pediatric Associates of Jacksonville, Jacksonville City, FL

Satya Sattva Studio, Jacksonville City, FL



**Test and promote TCQ as mind-body interventions:**

-  Positive predictive outcomes
-  Neurodivergent children with special needs
-  ASD-specialized pediatric clinic & inclusive environments

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM @ THE SANCTUARY



“Sanctuary on 8th Street”, Jacksonville City, FL



# VOLUNTEER CLASSES @ THE SANCTUARY



## TCQ classes for children & teens attending a community 'Sanctuary'

- Home-schooled children
- After-school students
- Summer camps

## Sanctuary Community Program:

- Youth living in marginalized neighborhoods & concentrated poverty in the city, at-risk due to life circumstances.
- Some children reached the juvenile justice => in need of recovery or rehabilitation.
- Positive mentoring, enrichment activities, academic remediation, youth flourishing.
- Support for establishing long-term physical, emotional, and role functioning.
- Crossing the socio-psychological barriers to positive integration within communities.

# TCQ STYLES & FORMS



## Animal Frolics Qigong:

- The classic Wu Qin Xi exercises (simplified) & new contemporary forms

## Integral Qigong:

- Bu Zheng Qigong (warming-up exercises)
- The 9 Phases Qigong (IIQTC)

## Tai Chi Walk:

- Add-on to the Integral Qigong course (free style, then progressing)

**\*Adapted teaching methods, implemented in real-world contexts.**

**\*Positive outcomes by self-report and observational results.**



# AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Specific Challenges  
Teaching Adaptations

# AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

## TEACHING ADAPTATIONS



### SPECIFIC CHALLENGES:

- Getting children interested in complex exercise routines;
- Settling in the practice or maintaining balance during a TCQ flow;
- Becoming engaged and establishing a long-term grounded practice.

### In the after-school context, at the end of a stressful day at school:

- Teach them to enable inner self-regulation;
- Educate their awareness of the internal feedback & feed-forward loops;
- Explain the heart-brain connection, how to bring them in harmony.

# AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS TEACHING ADAPTATIONS (CONT'D)



## Key for the Session Opening (ready-position):

Always start with the 'ABC': Alignment, Breath, Calmness

## In Standing Meditation, perform the Three Corrections:

- Alignment (align the body): back straight, knees bent...
- Breath (regulate the breath): breath in and out, imagine the ocean breeze...
- Calmness (clear the mind): imagine the ocean calm and peaceful, sunny day...

**Tip:** For the little kids who generally don't stay in one spot, place a hula hoop on the ground for each of them, and invite them to step inside the hoop. There is a high chance they will stay in the hoop and not wander off!

# AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS TEACHING ADAPTATIONS (CONT'D)



Observe the mind & emotional state of the students:

- A prerequisite for establishing a good practice session;
- Significant empathy ability is required.

Through mind-body integration and harmonization, the practice should help maintain/restore children's well-being, vitality, balance, peace and serenity.

=> Chose the level of TCQ exercise that have the potential to correctly coordinate the breathing patterns with physical postures & meditation.

# AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS TEACHING ADAPTATIONS (CONT'D)



If the students' state is:

- excitement, fear, nervousness, anxiety...
- excessive thinking (e.g., after school exams)...

that increase Beta and High Beta brainwave activity in the brain

⇒ Focus the practice on:

**Relaxation and activities that may increase Alpha brainwaves!**

(Qigong meditation, visualization exercises, calming breathing exercises, free-style Tai Chi walk)

# AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS TEACHING ADAPTATIONS (CONT'D)



If the students' state is:

- sadness, depression, lethargy...

⇒ Focus the practice on:

**Revitalizing activities that may increase Beta frequencies!**

(Dynamic breathing exercises, stronger Qigong warming-up practice, progressing towards dynamic health Qigong forms, enjoyable, entertaining Animal Frolics Qigong routines)



# NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS

Specific Challenges  
Teaching Adaptations

# NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS TYPICAL PROFILE



- **Mostly in fight-or-flight mode**
  - more of Sympathetic than Parasympathetic activation
- **They often experience:**
  - stress, anxiety, irritability, withdrawal;
  - sleep problems, fatigue, low energy;
- **Many experience sensory sensitivities & dysregulation;**
- **Many experience chronic pain & pain-related distress:**
  - headaches, migraines;
  - musculoskeletal issues, gastrointestinal pain;

**Sometimes, multiple overlapping challenges!**

# NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS TEACHING ADAPTATIONS



## SPECIFIC CHALLENGES:

Individualized approach to teaching is often required => One-to-one teaching.

- Sensory sensitivity
  - hyper- / hypo-responsive to sensory inputs (lights, noises...)
  - sensorially overwhelmed; sensory integration is difficult;
  - the student may become unresponsive, or overreacting/panicking;
  - the trainer may become confused!
- Coordinating movements in a flowing practice may be particularly difficult;
- Maintaining focus and attention span for long enough for the practice;
- Maintaining resilience throughout the practice, and after.

# NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS TEACHING ADAPTATIONS (CONT'D)



## Initial practice: One-to-one, individualized

- Identify an individual relaxation strategy that proves to help balance the individual student's nervous system.
- Make it a routine exercise for the student...
  - => A personalized **coping tool** for self-regulation.
- If experiencing sensory sensitivity...
  - => Make environmental adjustments at the practice location;
  - => Provide sensory supports.
- If experiencing migraines, headaches...
  - => Focus on the relaxation strategy that helps them in the moment.

# NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS TEACHING ADAPTATIONS (CONT'D)



## Key for a Successful Practice:

### **“Start low and go slow”...**

- Gradually increase the practice over the span of several weeks;
- Find a balance between progressing and accommodating;
- These students could not be expected to excel overnight!

### **Avoid negative interpretations...**

- that the child can't do the practice...
- that they are non-compliant... not willing to participate...

### **Keep calm while teaching!**

- Maintain empathy, patience...
- Be mindful to what the child may feel or experience...

# NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS TEACHING ADAPTATIONS (CONT'D)



## Long-Term Practice:

- Mind strategies that increase Parasympathetic function (TCQ-specific);
- Stress-management & distress-tolerance techniques;
- Progressive muscle relaxation; breath awareness & control;
- Low-impact exercises (especially with migraines): gentle slow movements;
- Sleep regulation (evening routine!).

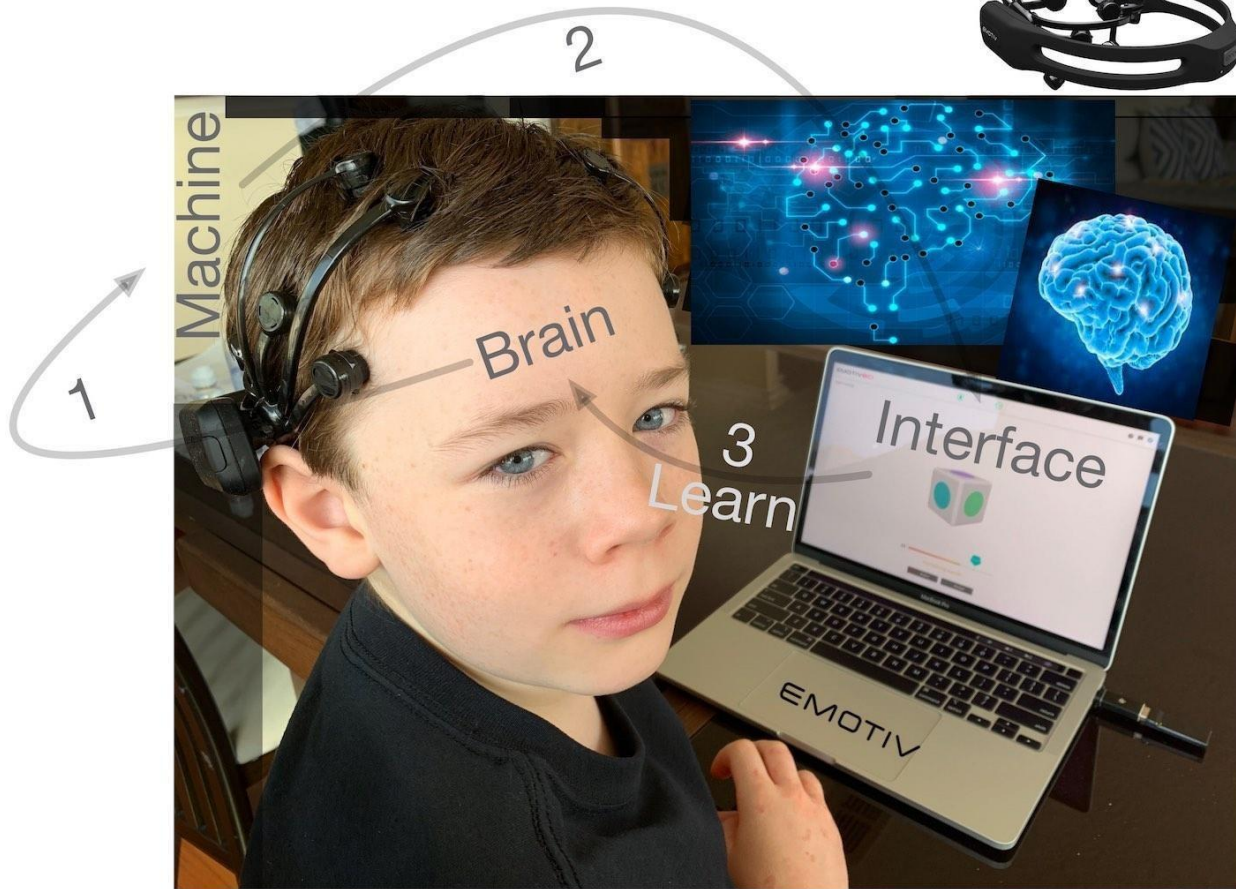
**Social exclusion & peer rejection => Chronic stress =>**

**=> More isolation & withdrawal =>**

**=> Engagement in social activities & sports is even more stressful!**

# SCIENCE FAIR PROJECT (2020)

## "MIND OVER BOT"



**NEURODIVERGENT STUDENT**  
**WON 2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE**  
**INTERNATIONAL FLVS SCIENCE FAIR**  
**(8TH GRADE)**

### **Brain-Computer Interface (BCI)**

- He used the non-invasive Emotiv EPOC+ EEG Neuroheadset & Emotiv BCI.

### **Qigong method of relaxation:**

- Meditation, visualization, and breathing

# GEORGE'S RESEARCH PROJECT

## "MIND OVER BOT" (2020)



George investigated how regular training sessions could help him improve his capability in using Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) technology to trigger and control computer commands with his thoughts.

The EEG-based BCI allows real-time recording & visualization of data, displaying performance metrics, tracking & comparing over time.

1. As a techie Neurodivergent student with High-Functioning Autism and ADHD, George learnt he could train his ability to clear his mind of distracting thoughts, focus on 'one thought at a time', and maintain a longer attention span, by using BCI technology.

⇒ His results proved the training effect accumulated with repeated practice.

# GEORGE'S RESEARCH PROJECT



## "MIND OVER BOT" (2020)

2. He experimented with a Qigong method of relaxation as an exercise to improve his mind & emotional state and to reduce stress BEFORE starting the BCI training sessions.
    - => To investigate if relaxation would positively affect his concentration and focus capacity.
- ⇒ His Performance Metrics displayed better results in the training sessions after the Qigong relaxation exercise.
- ⇒ His level of stress/relaxation did affect his training performance in controlling computer commands with his thoughts.



# MENTORSHIP @ THE 'SANCTUARY'

Specific Challenges  
Teaching Adaptations

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM TEACHING ADAPTATIONS



## SPECIFIC CHALLENGES:

- Boosting children's ability to inhibit unwanted memories and intrusive thoughts
- Reducing the feeling of separateness & bias
- Increasing self-acceptance
- Reducing catastrophizing tendencies
- Increasing hope & optimism
- Uplifting mood
- Improving psychological balance

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

## TEACHING ADAPTATIONS (CONT'D)



### Key for the Session Opening:

- Starting the class with a contemplative practice of 'training the awareness of the heart'
- It brings awareness to the sino-atrial node (the heart's natural pacemaker)
- Rationale: Increasing parasympathetic modulation, improving heart rate variability & heart-mind coherence.

**=> Key component to the success of the practice session.**

### Qigong and Tai Chi prove effective in:

- enabling coping mechanisms, internal self-regulation;
- increasing self-acceptance, mindfulness, balance;
- decreasing stress and anxiety.



# THANK YOU!

**Adina @ Satya Sattva Studio**

<http://www.satyasattva.com/>

<http://www.satyasattva.com/adin-as-articles/>

[adina@satyasattva.com](mailto:adina@satyasattva.com)

[adina.riposan@gmail.com](mailto:adina.riposan@gmail.com)



# ANNEX 1

## ANIMAL FROLICS

# ANNEX 1: ANIMAL FROLICS



**Symbiosis with nature, empathy and compassion,  
joy and happiness!**

## Qigong forms inspired from the life of the animals:

- Classic Wu Qin Xi exercises, simplified for children (Deer, Tiger, Bear, Monkey, Crane).
- New contemporary forms (Dragon, Phoenix, Butterfly, Dolphin, Turtle, Snake...).

## In the first session:

- Talk about popular children's TV shows  
(e.g., "Wild Kratts" of the zoologist brothers Chris and Martin Kratt)
- Read picture books (e.g., "The Water Dragon. A Chinese Legend" by Li Jian)

# ANNEX 1: ANIMAL FROLICS (CONT'D)



## Practice session:

- Identify with the relevant animal for imitating its temperament, psychological character, physical movements and attitudes.
- Coordinate breathing patterns with physical postures that imitate particular movements and gestures of the featured animal, bird, or mythical creature.
- Meditate on the qualities and powers of each of them, preparing to become “like them”... Key phrase: We acquire “creature’s powers”...

## End of session:

- Feel grateful for acquiring their qualities, express your gratitude.
- Make friends with the animals and thank them!



# ANNEX 2

## RESEARCH PROJECTS

# ANNEX 2: RESEARCH PROJECTS



## Roadmap for Independent Research – Satya Sattva Studio (2016)

<http://www.satyasattva.com/adin-as-articles/>

- Using **Portable EEG Technology** and **Heart Rate Monitor** to Investigate Physiologic Effects of Contemplative Disciplines, Soft Martial Arts and Traditional Hatha Yoga on the Internal Self-Regulation Mechanisms.
- We use a **non-invasive portable EEG device – EMOTIV EPOC+ EEG Headset** to record brain activity data. The associated software package allows the real-time display of raw EEG data stream, FFT, 3D display model and real-time 3D brain map monitoring and brain activity visualization. The preliminary data is further used in spectral data analysis. Video EEG feature is used for Synchronized Video Recording (with sound) that can be added to the EEG data acquisition system. Markers indicate specific events or areas of interest in EEG files as they are recording; the events are later used during playback and analysis.

# ANNEX 2: RESEARCH PROJECTS (CONT'D)



## Project Proposals with the University of Florida Health (2016)

### 1. UF CTSI Patient-Oriented Clinical Research Pilot Study:

#### Qigong Mind-Body Intervention as Complementary Health Approach in Pediatric Chronic Pain: Investigating the feasibility of a 12-week Qigong program.

(Saliva stress-related lab investigations; HRV (Heart-Rate Variability) investigations; Psycho-Physiological Coherence and Physiological Entrainment during coherence; EEG investigations to elucidate brainwaves pattern in children with chronic pain, at baseline, and evaluate for changes during the Qigong practice; Brain Imaging (fMRI) and Multimodal Functional Neuroimaging (fMRI/EEG), and using 3D EEG as Pain Bio-Marker, to investigate the effects of Qigong on pain modulation & processing.)

\*Movement Artifacts problem with EEG electrodes during TCQ practice/walking.

\*Artifact Detection and Removal Methods are required.

# ANNEX 2: RESEARCH PROJECTS (CONT'D)



## 2. UF CTSI Translational Pilot Program:

Implementation of a Mind and Body Interventions Program as Complementary Health Approaches in Pediatric Chronic Pain.

## 3. UF CTSI Patient-Oriented Clinical Research Pilot Study:

Qigong Mind-Body Modality for Pain and Aging: Complementary Health Approach for Pain Management in the Aging Population.

(Investigating the feasibility of a 12-week Qigong program; EEG and HRV assessment)

Collaboration with Osprey Village Retirement Community, FL, and the Pain Clinical Research Unit (PainCRU) at UF Clinical Research Center (CRC), FL.

# ANNEX 2: RESEARCH PROJECTS (CONT'D)



## Project Proposals with University of Notre Dame (2019-2020)

### 1. Project at The Sanctuary, Jacksonville, FL (2019)

A **contemplative intervention** of ‘**training the awareness of the heart**’, combining specific methods of meditation, breath and contemplative prayer, to be tested in the real-world context of the “**Sanctuary on 8th Street**” teaching program.

The practice outcomes will be assessed by using **Biofeedback technology** and **Artificial Intelligence (Deep Neural Networks)** algorithms for research data interpretation. We will examine the feasibility of this intervention as a **Biofeedback training protocol**.

### 2. Project at Osprey Village Retirement Community, FL (2020)

Leveraging the benefits of an adapted gentle **contemplative Qigong intervention** for the **elderly to ease transition** and prosociality in a senior living community – by improving self-acceptance, coping mechanisms and accommodative coping skills.