

Tai Chi / Qi Gong / Kung Fu



What Is Tai Chi?

If you have ever see documentaries on TV about China, you have probably seen groups of people in the parks and in the villages in the early morning doing slow, easy gentle movements. This is Tai Chi. It is a practice that may be enjoyed by people of all ages, even into the 100's. Although Tai Chi has its origins as a very powerful martial art, most people in this country practice it for its health giving qualities.

Others practice it as a form of moving meditation. Tai Chi is an exercise that can be practiced by anyone regardless of religious or philosophical persuasion. There is no religious practice associated with Tai Chi.

Tai Chi is a tool for us to become intimately connected to the Vital Force - the energy that keeps us alive and heals us. The Chinese called this Vital Force Qi or Chi and is pronounced "chee". Qi is best understood if we look at the ultimate scenario. What is the difference between a person who is alive and then two seconds later that person is dead? The physical body at death still contains blood, nerves, bone, brain and organs. The difference is that body has no more energy, Qi, Vital Force. This Qi is the fuel that makes all of our bodily processes work. No Qi, no life. Our well being, indeed our life, is directly related to the amount and quality of Qi in our life.

There are three major sources of Qi. One is the Qi that we receive from our parents at conception. Another is from the food that we eat. The last is from the air that we breathe. Proper use of the breath is the area where Tai Chi comes into play.

If you've ever watched a baby breathing, you will notice that the abdomen expands and contracts with the inhalation and exhalation, respectively. As we get older, we may get "up-tight", nervous, angry, agitated, frustrated and the first thing that we do is pull our breath into the upper part of the body and tense the shoulders. At this point we start to get all of the ailments that you could imagine that we would get if the energy were stuck in the upper part of the body. We get headaches, dizziness, insomnia, high blood pressure, stiff shoulders, stiff neck and excess mental activity.

Proper breathing that you will learn as part of your Tai Chi practice will allow you to bring this energy down where it belongs, in the lower abdomen as we re-learn to breathe like a baby. In breathing Tai Chi style, you will use the breath as a bridge between the body and the mind to bring them more into synchronization. You will become more aware of the Qi, the Vital Force as it flows through your body.

Focus and concentration are very important in Tai Chi. As you build more of a connection to your Qi; you are training the energy in your body to move through the very specific energy pathways so that the blockages of energy that cause us to have pain and sickness are freed. When you have a free flow of energy in your body, you are healthy. When there is blockage or deficiency, you are ill or in pain.

Training starts with the mind. In Tai Chi, the mind moves the energy and the energy moves the muscles. So you are almost "intending" your movements. Tai Chi is for everyone. In this hustle-bustle, fast paced world that we live in, Tai Chi acts as a reminder of what is really important – making a connection every day to the Vital Force. We do this by consciously slowing everything down so as to appreciate the only thing that we really do have – the here and now. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow is just a maybe, at least as part of this human experience. Practicing Tai Chi demands that you be present and aware so that you can connect to the Vital Force. Tai Chi will give you instant feedback when your focus and concentration are not here and now. Merely doing movements while your mind is elsewhere turns Tai Chi into a meaningless dance.

Benefits of Tai Chi

Dr. Quaranto often tells his patients, "The best and cheapest form of medicine that you are going to get is to come to Tai Chi class on Sunday and then to practice every day." You will acquire skills in your Tai Chi practice that you will be able to transfer into your everyday life, including your tennis and golf game. You will learn proper posture that will allow your structure and function to normalize. Your movements will become more graceful and secure and your

mind will become calmer, relaxed and focused. You will find that things that used to bother you will become inconsequential and you will attain more balance in your relationships. Benefits of Tai Chi are cumulative and can positively affect a person profoundly on a physical, mental or emotional level.

Tai Chi is helpful for:

- Asthma and Respiratory Problems
High Blood Pressure
Circulatory Problems
Stress and associated stress induced diseases (includes all the big ones)
Arthritis and Tight Stiff Joints
Balance Difficulties

In fact, in a study reported in the May 1995 issue of the American Journal of Geriatrics, Tai Chi was shown to be the most effective form of therapy in helping senior citizens to overcome the tendency to lose their balance and fall down.

Also in March 1993, the Arthritis Foundation announced that Tai Chi was being incorporated into their program. This program has been used to help people with rheumatoid arthritis as well as lupus and other diseases of the autoimmune system and connective tissues. Tai Chi is also useful in helping to alleviate depression and fatigue that can accompany a chronic debilitating illness or injury.

The nine major branches of Oriental Medicine are listed in order of effectiveness. Acupuncture, probably the most familiar to most people due to its high media coverage, is actually fifth on this list in effectiveness. Just above this at number four on the list is Tai Chi and associated movement therapy and breathing techniques called Qi Gong therapy. Qi Gong training will be part of your Tai Chi training.

About Dr. Quaranto

Dr. Quaranto has been teaching Tai Chi and Kung Fu since 1973. The Chinese martial arts teach that if you hurt yourself or you hurt someone else, you should be able to take care of that injury. Always having been intrigued with that aspect of his training in the martial arts, Dr. Quaranto had the opportunity to go to the New England School of Acupuncture (NESA), which is the oldest school in the country that teaches Oriental Medicine. He then closed his Kung Fu school and immersed himself in the study of Oriental Medicine. He considers this a continuation of his martial arts training.

After graduation from NESA in 1986, he began private practice in Oriental Medicine in Malden, Massachusetts. Throughout this period, Dr. Quaranto continued to teach Tai Chi and Kung Fu. After moving to beautiful Vero Beach in 1989, he founded the Vero Beach Tai Chi/Kung Fu Club so that his patients and the public at large could take advantage of the timeless benefits of Tai Chi and Kung Fu.

Classes

Classes have been held every Sunday from 5:00pm until 6:00pm at Jaycee Park, North A1A, Vero Beach since 1989. We hold classes outside as a way of staying as much as possible in tune with the environment. Nothing really compares with being outside during orange blossom season while doing breathing exercises.

Classes are held rain or shine. If it rains too hard, the shelters are used while meditation or Qi Gong techniques are practiced. If it is cold we are there. If it is rainy we are there. If it is cold AND rainy we are NOT there. If there is lightning we are not there. If in doubt, show up.

There are new people coming to class every week, so you'll never feel self conscious about being there. There are no uniforms, so wear comfortable clothing and flat shoes. Ages range from the teens into the 90's. If you have medical problems, we will be sensitive to that. This will be the best and cheapest form of medicine that you will get. All you have to do is do it. If you would like to participate in a more strenuous Kung Fu class from 6:00pm until 7:00pm immediately following the Tai Chi class, you are welcome to stay. The charge for class is nothing except your perseverance and commitment to make yourself better and better and better.