



...Those new to t'ai chi AND those wanting to continue their t'ai chi practice are WELCOME to join this community event. In each session we will focus on our breath, engage in gentle movement, learn t'ai chi basic exercises and over time explore t'ai chi postures (movements).

T'ai Chi as a Healing Art: Enhancing Resiliency And Balance

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A PDF of handout is located at communityevents.mononaterrace.com under Health/Wellness Programs, T'ai Chi at Monona Terrace.

The fundamental principles of t'ai chi arise out of a combination of Chinese philosophy and culture. While no one knows exactly how old it is, it dates back to at least 1750 A.D. Passed on from teacher to students, generation to generation and studied for its martial purposes, this system of rounded and fluid movements leads to health and peace of mind.

People come to t'ai chi for a number of reasons. Besides studying it as a martial art, some people wish to restore physical health or regain strength, flexibility and balance. Others want to perhaps manage depression, anxiety or pain. And still others want to maintain (or expand) peace of mind. T'ai Chi knows no age limit. People often start with basic exercises to increase range of motion and relax the mind. Many people feel a little awkward at first, primarily because the movement is very slow and this is sometimes in conflict with our fast pace society. As we find ourselves moving more easily throughout the day we become more accepting of the struggles we face in class.

Mind, Body, Breath Connection

A vital aspect of this healing art is the mind, body, breath connection. Central to this connection is being in the moment – mindfulness. It is the mind that guides the chi, which in turn influences the body and breath. We learn to deepen/enhance our breath, making it useful to both movement and stillness. We increasingly focus our attention to the here and now, rather than allowing our mind to be diverted and scattered. In doing so, we learn to simultaneously relax the mind and increase our powers of observation. We also begin to understand how our body moves in relationship to its parts and to the environment.

Cultivating Chi

Chi is sometimes defined as energy, essence of life and/or life force. T'ai chi has two main ingredients to

make our existing chi more resilient – mindfulness and harmonious movement. Cultivating (strengthening) chi is important to wellbeing and health. It enhances the immune system and restores the body's natural rhythm.

Slow Continuous Movement

Some consider t'ai chi to be a moving meditation. It encourages relaxed, slow, smooth, continuous movement which increases our flexibility, balance, and peace of mind. Learning to move harmoniously is much more than a physical exercise. This emphasis on slow motion helps us to better understand the philosophical principle and constant interchange of yin/yang energies. By allowing the chi to flow unobstructed throughout the body we become agile. Softness, agility, resilience helps us navigate the world. We become less fearful.

Health Benefits

With ongoing practice, we often see the following changes and health benefits.

- enhances balance and flexibility
- strengthens bones/muscles
- lessens anxiety and depression
- increases range of motion
- improves core strength
- stimulates glands/organs
- relaxes the mind
- fosters concentration
- expands lung capacity
- more

Looking for Serenity

Many of us are attracted to t'ai chi because of the serenity. We want to come to a place of total relaxation, sometimes to avoid the world. What we may not realize and yet come to deeply appreciate is how the simplicity of fluid movement can both relax and at the same time challenge the mind and body. Over time, practitioners learn to become soft AND resilient, gaining the flexibility to better manage (not escape) the world.