



...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).

The T'ai Chi Posture: Rooted, Relaxed, Resilient

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Monona Terrace • Group Health Cooperative Complimentary Medicine • Madison Daoguan

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

Fight, flight, or freeze responses are involuntary reactions our organism brings about as quickly as possible in order to ensure our survival. Unfortunately these responses can become habitual and often leave us tense and unrooted. Think about when we find ourselves slipping on the ice, or are accidentally pushed, or trip over something. A common response is to throw our arms in the air, lift our chest and lock our joints – all involuntary reactions that facilitate losing our root.

The slow, even, continuous movements of t'ai chi help us override the unwanted tension created by this fight, flight or freeze response. Through practice we repeatedly engage in movements that require us to sink our chi and settle into our body. Over time our body understands that not everything unexpected requires a fight, flight or freeze response. We find that in many situations it is more advantageous to relax our chest, soften our joints and sink into our lower extremities. In addition we learn to engage the core of the body to stabilize and maintain our balance.

Continuous practice also helps our mind stay cool and relaxed, with the ability to more clearly view our options. Many of us walk around with 'fire' on our brains. We have too much 'heat' in our mind – tension, anxiety, fear, worry, etc. Through t'ai chi practice we begin to transition this heat, moving it from our head to our dantian (gut). With a cool/tranquil mind and a relaxed/rooted body we are better prepared to navigate the world and encounter the unexpected.

The standing pillar exercise helps our body understand proper alignment, prepares our mind for movement, and

encourages connection with breath. Regardless if we are standing still or moving, the body principles are the same. We keep the crown of the head up, the chin down, softening the chest, keeping the tailbone underneath us etc. as described in the exercise. All of these principles will assist our balance and quiet our mind. Over time (with ongoing practice) this way of being with our body/mind will continue throughout our day.

Relaxed...Rooted...Mindful.

The way we want to be in this world.

STANDING PILLAR

- Toes together and heels apart.
Can also simply have feet close together.
- Hands resting lightly on the dantian.
Dantian is an area three fingers below the navel...it is where chi is cultivated and stored...women have right palm on the dantian with left hand on top...men have left palm on the dantian with right hand on top.
- Crown of the head pushed towards the sky/heavens.
- Head is evenly distributed; not in front/behind body.
- Relax the eyes and space between the eyes.
- Chin is slightly tucked; not lifted.
- Shoulders are even and relaxed.
- Slightly concave the chest, creating a relaxed and compassionate feeling in the chest.
- The lower back is relaxed (neutral spine).
- Tailbone is solidly underneath of you.
- Soften the thighs, knees and relax the ankles.
- Feet are planted firmly on the ground with weight more in the heels...using toes/soles for good contact but do not lean forward or bring the weight onto the toes.