



Wudang

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

3/20



From Sifu Paul

Meteorological spring has sprung, with the vernal equinox arriving soon. As the gathering energy of winter and the water element give way to the rising energy of spring and the wood element, the warmth of the sun brings nature to life and stimulates us to get outside and move. There are plenty of ways to move at the studio this spring, as the attached class schedule describes. In this issue: an article on T'ai Chi and our immune system, the question of the month on the Microcosmic Orbit meditation, and more. Here comes the sun.

Tai Chi, Metarobics, and Immunity

By Dr. Peter Anthony Gryffin

Tai chi practice has been shown to have a beneficial effect on T cells. In a study conducted at the Chang Gung Institute of Technology in Taiwan, 12 weeks of tai chi practice resulted in a significant increase in regulatory T Cells. Monocytes (large white blood cells) also decreased significantly. Lower Monocyte counts are an indication of good health, since Monocytes increase in response to infection and chronic inflammation, indicating poor health.

With the growing concern over the coronavirus and immunity in general, I thought it would be worth sharing research from my book *Mindful Exercise: Metarobics, Healing, and the Power of Tai Chi* by YMAA Publications. It used to be that the winter flu was a minor annoyance. But the past few years the flu has become a year-round phenomenon, resulting in a growing number of deaths. Although attributed to two different viruses,



just this weekend two high school students in my area died from the flu. Deaths in young adults is unusual. As noted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), typically 90 percent of deaths from influenza occur in those 65 years of age or older. And then there are the 80 plus deaths in China in less than a month, since December 31. Fifteen of these deaths were reported in one day, which has already spread to nations across the world, including five cases in the United States as of January 26, 2020.

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Here's how T'ai Chi
can help us ward off
illness.

Being a virus, antibiotics are ineffective. But tai chi and qigong can be an effective way to boost immunity through Metarobic* effects. A large underlying reason Metarobic exercises such as tai chi benefits immunity, relates to Hypoxia (oxygen deficiency in the tissues), which can cause an age-related decline in immunity. Hypoxia has a negative effect on T cells, which are important for mucosal defense, immunity and fighting inflammation. T cells are a type of lymphocyte, which is critical in the immune response. Tai chi, and related breath focused relaxation exercises such as qigong, have had a long-standing reputation for powerful effects for health, which may be in part due to effects on hypoxia.

Scientific Research

The reputation for health is well deserved, and can now be better understood through a growing body of scientific research. As noted in my research on Metarobic effects of tai chi and related exercises, which documents significant effects on enhanced blood oxygen saturation, diffusion, and oxygen metabolism, there is strong support that these exercises can have a direct effect on hypoxia. This would explain at least one facet of how and why slow-moving breath focused exercises can benefit immunity from a physiological perspective. And as noted in my book, it also explains why tai chi and related exercises have such a reputation as a powerful health exercise, since hypoxia underlies or complicates a wide range of conditions, from cancer to diabetes.

Tai chi practice has been shown to have beneficial effects on T cells. In a study conducted at the Chang Gung Institute of Technology in Taiwan, 12 weeks of tai chi practice resulted in a significant increase in regulatory T Cells. Monocytes (large white blood cells) also decreased significantly. Lower Monocyte counts are an indication of good health, since Monocytes increase in response to infection and chronic inflammation, indicating poor health. Researchers found that tai chi supports specific benefits for improved mucosal defense and a lower risk of autoimmune and inflammatory

disorders. The reasons for this were undetermined, although the researchers suggested that benefits may be due to the overall health benefits of exercise. The theory of Metarobics suggests that beyond the general benefit of exercise, Metarobic based exercises such as tai chi may have specific effects related to enhanced blood oxygen saturation, diffusion, effects on oxygen metabolism, with a resulting reversal of hypoxia.



Another study, conducted at California State University, Los Angeles, investigated the effects of tai chi practice on three groups, to determine effects on varicella zoster (Shingles) virus specific lymphocytes. Participants were divided into three groups; a tai chi group, a second group receiving the shingles vaccine, and a comparison group receiving no

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intervention. The practice of tai chi resulted in a significant 50 percent increase in T cells. The group receiving the shingles vaccine resulted in a 75 percent increase in T cells. The comparison group resulted in no change. Just practicing tai chi resulted in an increase in virus fighting T cells, potentially as a result of enhanced physiological function resulting from the Metarobic effects of these exercises, as noted above.



A third study, conducted at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, involved an experiment to see what happens when people both practiced tai chi and received the shingles vaccine. This study also compared three groups; one group just practicing tai chi, the second group just receiving the shingles vaccine, and the third group receiving the shingles vaccine and practicing tai chi. At the 6-week post-vaccine measure, in this study the tai chi only group had a 130 percent increase in antibodies (compared to 54 percent in the non tai chi group), and a 109 percent increase at the 20 week follow up (compared to 10 percent in the non tai chi group). The group, which received the vaccine and practiced tai chi, experienced a 173 percent increase in antibodies. This indicates the importance of vaccination, but also demonstrates the benefit of tai chi for enhancing overall immunity.

Tai Chi is Valuable

The researchers noted that tai chi may be particularly valuable for those diseases for

which there is no vaccine. This might be an important point for current concerns for the coronavirus. In my own practice, when I began focusing on elements related to pace, frame, overall relaxation and dosage, to maximize Metarobic effects, my own immunity seemed to be enhanced to the point that I have not had a cold or flu in over eight years. Among other benefits, enhanced cellular function, as a result of focusing on Metarobic aspects, also reversed the peripheral neuropathy I had developed, attributed to celiac disease.

Tai chi and qigong are not as easy as taking a pill. It requires practice and discipline. And having an understanding of physiological effects can help one to maximize benefits. But for those conditions for which there is no medical cure, for millions across the world, these exercises have reversed or at least improved a surprisingly wide variety of conditions. Although perhaps with a Metarobic understanding of effects on hypoxia and cellular function, perhaps not quite so surprising after all. Time and research will tell.

Dr. Peter Griffin has over 30 years of experience with tai chi, qigong, and yoga. His research includes implications related to hypoxia, cancer, and tai chi; the development of the theory of metarobics; and the application of mindfulness-based practices for dealing with stress, trauma, addiction, and destructive behavior. Dr. Griffin holds a PhD in health and human performance and a masters degree in kinesiology and health.

* Metarobic: The theory of metarobics is centered on the unique way the body responds in relationship to oxygen use during slow, relaxed movements. Blood oxygen measurements show that slow, relaxed movements, coupled with deep abdominal breathing, maximize blood oxygen saturation and diffusion to every cell of the body. With the root meta-meaning above, metarobics thus becomes “above aerobics” as an enhanced way of using oxygen in the body.

Sharing the Art of T'ai Chi

T'ai Chi is an enjoyable and healthful activity and is great to practice and share with others.

One simple and effective way that we can let people know about our studio is through poster-ing. If you have a favorite coffee shop, co-op grocery, neighborhood kiosk, library bulletin board, or other location that you frequent where you could place one of our studio posters on a regular basis, it would help expose our studio to our local communities. Simply grab 1 or 2 posters from the community room and hang them in your favorite location; check occasionally to see when the tabs are torn off and then replace the poster.

We are trying to monitor our marketing efforts more closely this year, so if you are hanging a studio poster regularly please let Sifu Paul know, as this will help us know where to focus our efforts. Even a single location postered regularly has an impact. Bringing a friend to try a free class is another simple way to share the practice.



Spring Festival at the U of M

This year, the Chinese American Student Association invited Twin Cities T'ai Chi to the Chinese New Year celebration at the University of Minnesota to demonstrate and teach T'ai Chi and Qigong. Kim Husband and Christopher Knudtson led more than 300 Chinese American students and their families in learning Qigong and T'ai Chi as part of

An Ounce of Prevention

With the cold and flu season now extending further into year-round cycles and the coronavirus making an appearance in the U.S., a refresher on best practices for staying healthy at the studio is in order. Some general considerations:

1. If you're sick, stay home.
2. Cover up if you sneeze or cough.
3. Wash hands or use hand sanitizer (provided in the office) before and after partner practices, after sneezing, coughing, or blowing your nose during partner work, or after using studio weapons.
4. Please don't leave dirty and sweaty clothes in the changing rooms; take them home and wash them.
5. Get daily Qigong and T'ai Chi practice to tune up your immune system.

the performances at the Coffman Union auditorium. The student-run organization seeks to share Chinese traditions and culture through a modern perspective in order to strengthen diverse perspectives on campus. The crowd was engaged and thoroughly enjoyed their introduction to Qigong and T'ai Chi. Thank you, Kim and Christopher.

Question of the Month

Question: I have heard a lot about the Microcosmic Orbit Meditation over the years. Can you explain what it is and does exactly?

Answer:

The Microcosmic Orbit is one of the best-known Daoist meditation practices and was written about more than 2,000 years ago. The

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In February, Kim Husband and Christopher Knudtson joined in the U of M's Chinese New Year celebration.

orbit meditation activates two primary deep energy pathways in the body, which help control and balance the body's energy flow. It was sometimes known as the Small Heavenly Round and also as the Small Water Wheel. The word "micro" means small; "cosmic" comes from the Greek word "kosmos" meaning order; and "orbit" is a circular path. The practice creates a small circular flow of energy that nourishes the body in two pathways in the torso known as the Conception and the Governor vessels. These two deep vessels nourish the 12 meridians or pathways of Qi flow that are used in acupuncture; they move the Qi in a river-like network of energy through the landscape of the human body. But what are these two Vessels, and where are they?

Within the model of Chinese medicine, we receive energy from our parents and ancestors in utero. Eight core pathways or vessels carry this ancestral energy at the deepest level and create the energetic structuring of our bodies:

1. A central pathway that is vertically deep within the body and runs along the front of the spine called the Penetrating Vessel
2. A horizontal path around the waist called the Belt Vessel
- 3-4. A path down each leg called the Motility or Heel Vessel
- 5-6. A path down each arm called the Regulating or Linking Vessel; and
- 7-8. The two pathways used in the microcosmic orbit practice: the Governor Vessel, which flows from the tip of the coccyx up the spine, over the head, and ends in the upper lip area, and the Conception Vessel, which flows from the perineum up the front of the torso to the area of the lower lip. These two vessels formed a circuit when we were in our mother's womb. Our energy circulated naturally along this orbital pathway and was fed via the umbilical cord, along with other aspects of our physical development.

Once the umbilical cord is cut, the continuous energetic circuit separates into the Conception



and Governor vessels. The Microcosmic Orbit practice restores a flow of energy similar to what we experienced in our mother's womb.

This greater circulation of energy has a positive impact on the overall health of the body; acts as a reservoir of Qi flow that

- feeds the meridian system
- stimulates the brain and spinal cord and the movement of cerebrospinal fluid
- cultivates Protective Qi called Wei Qi that maintains the body's inherent homeostasis by regulating, balancing, and maintaining body temperature, Qi, blood circulation, and metabolism; protects the organs from external pathogens; and develops our Energy Body—the matrix within the physical body that animates its functions.

The Microcosmic Orbit meditation will be taught at the studio in March. The course will teach a standing practice, which opens the orbit pathways, as well as a seated microcosmic practice. See the course schedule below for details.

*"We're lost, but
we're making good time."
— Yogi Berra*

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Yunan Mountains,
China

Upcoming Classes and Schedule Changes

Wednesday Healing Tao Meditation, 7:30–8:45 p.m.: The Microcosmic Orbit is the best-known Daoist meditation practice. The orbit meditation activates two primary deep channels in the body, which help control the balance of energy flow. The course will teach a standing practice, which opens the orbit pathways, as well as a seated microcosmic practice. Session begins March 18th, \$144 (free to members).

Saturday 12 Animals Class 10:30–11:25 a.m.: The 12 Animals is the foundation practice for the Liu Ho Pa Fa system. Beginning March 7, we will start to learn the Snake Form. The Snake teaches intercepting and coiling techniques. Beginners are welcome. Check with Sifu Paul if you're interested in joining the class.

Saturday Eclectsis: Boxing Fundamentals, 9:30–10:25 a.m.: Learn the fundamentals of boxing and acquire the five elements of martial arts—speed, timing, accuracy, power, and foundation—through carefully selected drills and practices. These activities are great for reflexes, conditioning, and understanding the core principles of martial arts. This class teaches students how to strike and throw combinations of punches with proper body



mechanics, flow, and rhythm to maximize leverage and conserve energy and also how to train with a partner using safety-training gear: focus mitts, punch balls, and foam sticks. It's also a lot of fun. This class develops an understanding of the striking aspects of T'ai Chi. Beginners are welcome.

Cool in the Community Room

We now have a ceiling fan in the community room, a new LED overhead light in the office, and new lights in the changing rooms. Thanks to Fran Myers for providing this upgrade for our studio.`

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Another studio record: nearly 20 students studying the T'ai Chi Fan form.