

Wudang

Twin Cities T'ai Chi

6/18

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER



From Sifu Paul

Greetings, everyone,

As I write this introduction, it is 100 degrees Fahrenheit outside. It's hard to believe that six weeks ago, a three-day blizzard produced 18 inches of snow in the Twin Cities. Perhaps it was the unusual weather that generated a bumper crop of lilacs in my yard. The longer days foreshadow the approaching solstice, when summer is in full swing and outdoor T'ai Chi beckons.

In this issue, T'ai Chi is in the national spotlight, a special anniversary, a gift of fans, upcoming classes, and more.

With global events such as World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day now being celebrated in more than 80 countries worldwide, and new medical research continually emerging that shows an ever-widening scope of benefits, T'ai Chi and Qigong are poised to become mainstream body-mind activities approaching the levels of popularity enjoyed by yoga. A recent article published by MSNBC (reprinted below) shows that major media outlets are taking notice and helping to increase exposure and raise awareness of these arts. —Paul

Why Tai Chi Is the Most Underrated Workout for Relieving Stress and Improving Sleep

Typically popular among seniors, the meditative movement has wide-ranging health benefits that may just convince you to add it into your own fitness routine.

By Christina Heiser

It's pretty well known that exercise is one of the best ways to curb stress and boost your mood. (Just think about how relaxed and



happy you feel after a yoga class, kickboxing session or run in the park.)

In fact, according to a study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, participants, who all had anxiety associated with chronic illnesses, significantly reduced their worry when they exercised regularly for a period of three to 12 weeks. Fitness sessions lasting over 30 minutes had the biggest effects on anxiety.

Tai Chi: The Major Stress-Reliever You Didn't Know You Needed

One of the best—yet most underrated—exercises for stress relief (and your health overall) is tai chi. If you've ever seen a group of people moving slowly and gracefully together at your local park, there's a good chance they're practicing tai chi, which combines low impact movements and meditation for a body-mind workout. Pinterest picked tai chi as one of its top 100 trends for 2018, so it's safe to say it won't be flying under the radar for much longer.

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MSNBC article touts
the many benefits of
T'ai Chi practice

Tai chi is an ancient Chinese martial art that has been practiced for about 2,000 years, says Dee Ogilvy, who has practiced it for more than 20 years herself and now runs her own tai chi program, while also teaching it as a part of Missouri State University's Employee Wellness Program.

Tai chi was originally developed for self-defense, says Aideen Turner, physical therapist and CEO of Virtual Physical Therapists, but it's evolved into "a gentle way of moving and stretching," says Turner. "Positions flow into the next without a pause so that the body is in constant motion. It's very low impact and causes minimal stress on muscles and joints." Deep breathing is also an important part of tai chi, she adds.

Turner says the majority of people who practice tai chi are seniors—you lose flexibility and balance as you get older, and tai chi is a way to get moving again without pounding on your joints. That being said, it's something someone of all ages can benefit from doing, says Turner. Especially if you're someone who is pounding the pavement training for a race or frequently partaking in high-intensity workouts—slowing down and reconnecting through tai chi may be a welcomed addition to your routine (and break on your joints).

In a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, researchers found that participants who practiced tai chi regularly had a decreased rate of mortality, similar to the effects seen from walking and jogging in other studies. Those who exercised for five to six hours a week saw the biggest benefits.

That's far from the only scientific evidence to support the benefits of tai chi. A study published in the *Journal of Rheumatology* found that patients with osteoarthritis improved their symptoms and balance after practicing tai chi for 12 weeks. Another study, published in *PLOS One*, found that tai chi helped improve cardio function in otherwise healthy adults.

As far as tai chi's positive effects on our mind, it's mostly thanks to the meditation component of the exercise, says Ogilvy. A small study published in *Psychoneuroendocrinology* reported that brief mindfulness meditation (three, 25 minute sessions) minimized psychological stress. Ogilvy notes that the effects are even greater when movement and meditation are paired together—having to be present and focus on your movements and breathing helps bring on the relaxation.

It makes sense then that tai chi could also improve your quality of sleep, says Turner. Research in *Clinical Interventions in Aging* saw that older adults with cognitive impairment and frequent sleep disturbances were able to snooze better when they incorporated tai chi into their lives.

Additionally, tai chi's combo of movement and meditation provides mental clarity, says Ogilvy. "Tai chi increases the communication of your mind and body," she says. "Seniors who practice tai chi can regain the lost brain elasticity which is normal in aging," she says. A study published in the *Journal of Sport and Health Science* suggested that tai chi has positive effects on cognitive function and memory in older adults.

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"Slowing down and reconnecting through tai chi may be a welcomed addition to your routine."



Contact Us

For timely updates, follow Twin Cities T'ai Chi Ch'uan on **Facebook**.

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The Beginner's Guide to Tai Chi

Ready to give tai chi a try? Follow these tips for beginners.

Choose your tai chi style. There are five different styles to choose from—Ogilvy practices the Yang style, which is the most popular and consists of 108 sequences of movements. Each movement sequence has five or six different parts to it, and each part flows slowly and continuously into the next, says Ogilvy. When Ogilvy teaches a class, she usually focuses on one movement sequence. She'll have her class repeat the sequence until they grasp it pretty well and then move on to incorporating the meditation component. "You have to feel comfortable with moving before you can get to calming the mind," says Ogilvy.

Be picky with whose class you take. Since there's no tai chi alliance, it can be difficult to determine just how qualified your instructor is. Ogilvy says you shouldn't be shy about asking a teacher questions about their training before taking a class. "I know some people who've taken two classes and are teaching tai chi," she says. "You have to find a teacher who has actually studied tai chi. This is thousands of years' worth of knowledge that can only be passed on by people who study this all their lives. I feel like after 28 years, I'm still a beginner."

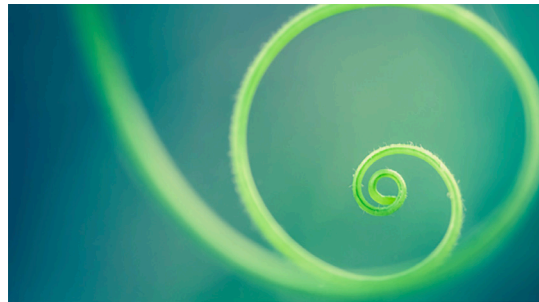
Try an outdoor class. Tai chi classes are commonly offered at senior centers, says Turner, as well as outdoor parks. As a bonus, being outside has mental health benefits, too. That's what scientists noticed while working on research published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*. Study participants, who all had major depressive disorder, showed mood improvements after walking in nature.

Don't get discouraged if at first you don't succeed. "Tai chi is complex," says Ogilvy. "But that complexity is why it's working in the long run, so don't give up—just keep trying to pick up something." Some people pick up the choreography quickly but may not be able to master the meditation, while others may be able to relax their minds but have difficulty

moving. "If someone comes and sits for six months and does nothing but sit but they show up every time, they're still going to get something out of tai chi," says Ogilvy.

Practice it regularly. Turner suggests 20 minutes of tai chi a day at least three days a week for maximum benefits. "The more you move, the better off you are," she says.

"Tai chi is a great form of exercise because it's safe, it's fun, and it gets the whole body moving again. Plus, you're not going to risk another injury because of the smooth, gentle rhythmic movements."



New Ceiling Fans Help the Studio Keep Its Cool

Our 25-year-old ceiling fans are retiring after a quarter century of service. New, more powerful, energy-efficient fans are replacing them. Thanks to studio member Fran Myers for donating the fans—just in time for summer.

Advanced Training in Asheville

Sifu Paul will be returning to Asheville, NC, in early July for a week of advanced training in Qigong and meditation with Michael Winn, founder of Healing Tao USA. The trip is made possible through the studio's education fund. Thanks to all who have contributed to the fund and made the trip possible.

Graduation News

Congratulations to Seth Taylor for completing the T'ai Chi Ch'uan Solo Form.

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The beginner's guide to T'ai Chi

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Congratulations, Seth!

White Tiger Event

On May 12, a six-member demo team (Dan Frederick, Tom Hautman, Kim Husband, Larry Klueh, Todd Nesser, and Mike Texler) traveled to the White Tiger Martial Arts school in Fridley for an educational exchange with Master Robert Frankovich and his black belt class. They demonstrated Huei Ming's Mini Form (a condensed, beginner-friendly subset of the Solo Form) and the sword and saber forms and taught the White Tiger students a few postures from each.

Then the roles were reversed, and the White Tiger crew demonstrated Haidong Gumdo forms and taught our group the basics of holding and swinging the slender, single-edged Korean sword. The session culminated with the visitors being invited to borrow Master Frankovich's sharpened sword to slice through thick cardboard tubing.

Throughout the visit, there were repeated exclamations of "We do something just like that!" from both groups. It quickly became clear that our two arts shared more similarities than differences, especially at the higher levels of practice. Key areas of overlap included solid foundational stances and rooting, upright posture, and moving the whole body as one unit. We even have a few posture names in common: both T'ai Chi and Haidong Gumdo have a posture called Golden Rooster.

The outing was a great success and a lot of fun for all involved.



And you could be part of the next one! The demo team is looking for experienced students able to discuss and demonstrate T'ai Chi at off-site events, such as meetings, conventions, and educational exchanges with other schools. Must know the Solo Form, some Qigong, and perhaps a weapon form.

Upcoming demos include:

- July 6: demo/mini class at CONvergence sci-fi convention
- August 3–5: demo/mini class at 2D Con gaming convention
- Sept. 28–30: mini class at DeCONgestant sci-fi convention
- Jan. 4–6, 2019: mini class at CONsole Room Dr. Who convention

Contact Kim Husband if you are interested.

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Master Frankovich instructs the T'ai Chi demo team in Haidong Gumdo sword practice

V (left)

Larry Klueh gets some hands-on instruction from Master Frankovich

V (right)

White Tiger students try their hands at the T'ai Chi sword form



Happy Anniversary

Congratulations to studio member and tutor LaVonne Bunt on celebrating 20 years at the studio. We appreciate all that you do. Cheers to the next 20 years!



Studio Keycards

Our studio is unique, as we are the only tenants in the Dow Building with our own keycard access system. This was difficult to negotiate and acquire and is a benefit and privilege we extend to our members. In the interest of building security, the building management is requesting that we charge a \$20 deposit on all keycards issued to new members. It is a deposit that will be returned if and when a member decides to leave. Current members with cards will be grandfathered in to the new system and will not be required to make a deposit.

If your membership has lapsed and you are just taking a break with the intention of returning, please hang on to your card. We would love to have you back in the studio taking classes when the time is right. If you have a card and know you won't be back, please contact the studio via email and make arrangements to return the card or drop it in the mail and return it.

Upcoming Classes and Schedule Changes

Weapons Monday 7:30–8:30

Beginning in August, the Monday-night weapons class will begin learning the T'ai Chi saber. The saber has a single-edged blade and is taught to help develop active footwork, pushing power, and whole-body movement. A solo saber form and a short two-person set will be taught. The class is open to anyone who has completed the Solo Form.

43 Postures Form Tuesday 6:00–7:15 and Saturday 11:30–12:30

The 43 Postures Form will be open to members who have completed the Solo Form beginning in July.

Pushing Hands Tuesday 7:00–8:15

Beginning in July, the pushing-hands class will offer a study in the T'ai Chi posture of Press. Learn the form, feeling, and applications of this important posture. Open to members who have completed the Solo Form.

Meditation: the Six Healing Sounds and Five Animals Qigong

The Six Healing Sounds is one of the oldest qigong practices in China. It is a calming energy practice that uses movement, sound, and visualization to balance the emotions, working with the energy of the body's five major organs.

This class integrates seated, standing, and moving sequences. The movement practice combines the healing sounds with five animal movements to create a short, easy-to-learn practice that's perfect for summer.

This one-hour class at 7:30 on Wednesday evenings runs 8 weeks. It starts July 18, 2018. Cost: \$96 for nonmembers. Free to members.

Open Practice

The Wednesday-morning open practice will be closed for the summer. We are looking for some volunteers to host an open practice on another day and time. See Sifu Paul if you are interested.

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Happy 20th T'ai Chi anniversary, LaVonne!