

An Introduction to Tai Chi

It's hard to think of Tai Chi is a martial art when the phrase 'martial arts' brings to mind fast kicks and punches, and a lot of athleticism by its participants; while a common perception of Tai Chi is a slowly enacted pattern of movements performed outdoors. Believed to be over 1,500 years old, Tai Chi [also known as Tai Chi Chuan], is also a type of exercise that combines meditation with a flowing series of movements called forms.

Tai Chi is a gentle, low impact exercise that was once a combat martial art whose movements came from imitating animals. Especially popular with seniors because it is a low impact way to exercise, Tai Chi also helps with balance, posture and coordination - also added benefits for seniors. But whatever your age, this beautiful martial art form, often called 'mediation in motion,' is beneficial for young and old alike.

In a world of high stress and daily tension, exercisers will find an inner peace and calm while practicing Tai Chi, as the focus is on breathing while performing movement. A breath in or out corresponds to a movement which, it is believed, is what aids the flow of energy, life-force or chi, throughout the body. When chi is blocked the end results are stress, illness and a disconnect between the mind and body. Tai Chi brings harmony back to the body.

The image of Tai Chi practitioners in parks, all following a master in perfectly synchronized movements, is a common one today. This group exercise is freehand Tai Chi but there are actually many styles practiced around the world that are named after the different Chinese families that perfected them. Weapons such as swords and sticks are also a part of Tai Chi and a student of this martial art will also find there are over one hundred stances, as well as a series of movements, or forms, that are lengthy and varied to learn.

But whichever style of Tai Chi you choose to partake in, it is advisable to learn in person from a master who can give guidance and correction, and not from a mass produced DVD. Tai Chi has evolved over the centuries so there is much to learn to get the full benefits of this wonderful, ancient martial art form.

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About the Author

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