

The secrets behind Tai Chi Chuen

When the word meditation is brought up, many people believe it involves sitting still on a mat with legs folded and eyes half-closed, inhaling and exhaling while concentrating on pleasant thoughts. But this is not the only type of meditation.

Tai Chi Chuen is a type of moving meditation. You don't have to sit still, but this moving exercise can achieve the same effect as sitting meditation. For those who cannot sit still to meditate (I am one of them), you may want to try Tai Chi Chuen.

What is Tai Chi Chuen?

Tai Chi Chuen is most-ly known as Tai Chi, which means "the ultimate universe." Chuen means fist. Together it means "fist can achieve ultimate health and force" – or self-defense. Tai Chi Chuen is an ancient Chinese exercise that has been practiced for thousands of years to promote good health and self-defense.

If you have seen some Chinese movies, you probably have seen this form of exercise in the background. Tai Chi movements are slow, soft, continuous and circular, and dance-like. One posture flows to another, coordinating the breathing, body and mind with each movement. Because it is low-impact and moves slowly, the majority of the practitioners are older adults, but it is good for all ages.

The benefits

When one practices Tai Chi Chuen movements, it brings the mind and body together in harmony. You may be bending the knees, raising the palms or

lowering the other hand, shifting the body weight from one leg to the other, stepping forward or backward, turning the ankles or wrists, twisting the waist. All these movements are practicing Yin and Yang, the principles of harmony in the universe, which bring the body and mind into balance.

If one can coordinate breathing with every move, fresh oxygen will rush into the lungs and organs, which creates energy (we call it Chi or Qi) and in turn will improve blood circulation. When energy and blood circulation are flowing well, your body will be in a healthy disposition.

To practice Tai Chi, you need to concentrate and memorize the movements. First you empty your mind of worldly stress and worries. Your total focus is on doing one movement slowly yet deliberately before you move on to the next movement. This concentration will give your central nervous system a rest. It is known to help people with depression just like sitting meditation. After the exercise, you will feel energized, calm and the mind is more clear, creative and refreshed.

Tai Chi is known to:

- Improve balance and help prevent falling. If a person does

fall, the damage will be less severe.

- Promote mind- and limb-movement coordination. The four limbs do different movements, which will activate nerve cells and the mind, slowing down nerve deterioration.

- Increase muscle flexibility, agility and balance without over-exerting the heart or straining the muscles. Recently, researchers have found that people who practiced three hours or more per week had less incidences of falling. This may seem minor, but to an elderly person falling can cause major damage.

Many articles emphasize the benefits of Tai Chi, such as helping some physically handicapped people walk again. Some people with multiple sclerosis have practiced Tai Chi diligently every day, gaining improvements in their memory and energy. They manage their lives better and gain a better outlook on life.

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