

Tai Chi: The inside story



MAMIE WOO
HEALTHY LIVING - THE CHINESE WAY

A lot of people don't understand the true benefits of practicing Tai Chi Chuen. They have heard Tai Chi is good for their health so they come for a few classes -- then quit. Health does not improve so quickly.

But some new students decide it is hard to coordinate the hands and feet at the same time. Or they can't remember the movements, get frustrated, and give up.

Don't quit!

Just keep taking your classes and ease up your self-pressure. Learn one movement at a time, even if the movement is not perfect or graceful. Moving the limbs will help regain or keep your good health. Practicing Tai Chi Chuen can clear a foggy mind, enhance concentration, improve memory and is the key to total wellness.

What good does it do to give up? Only those who come back -- class after class -- overcoming any nonsensical feelings of being inadequate, will be able to enjoy its benefits.

Ever hear of meridians?

You may wonder how Tai Chi Chuen can be beneficial to your health.

It is based in traditional Chinese medicine principles and theory. In traditional Chinese medicine there are said to be 12 organ meridians in the human body. A meridian is a very tiny invisible channel or pathway running beneath the skin and linked to an organ. It delivers nourishment to either organs, nerves, brain, bones or muscles. For example, if it links to the heart, we called it Heart Meridian; if linked to the kidney, we called it Kidney Meridi-

an, etc. I'll write more about that next time.

Six meridians run along the hands representing lung, heart, large intestine, small intestine, pericardium (or crown of the heart), and "triple warmers," what we use to represent the whole body torso. Six meridians run along the feet and are associated with the liver, gall bladder, spleen, stomach, kidney and bladder.

There are also three meridians not linked to organs that have their own individual pathways. These are the Conception Vessel, located in the mid-line of the front of the body, the Governor Vessel, located in the mid-line of the back of the body, and the Belt Meridian, which is located just as it is named.

Get them active

When practicing Tai Chi Chuen -- turning the wrists, raising the arms or turning the ankles -- the related organ meridians in the area activate. Turning the body activates and balances the meridians in the body's torso. Every Tai Chi Chuen movement requires you to move your hands, feet, body and breath at the same time. It spreads the blood and the energy even-

ly over the course of your body, and your health will definitely improve. That's why some students experience some extra warmth after class.

In the beginning, I just ask students to coordinate the hands and feet movements. The second step is trying to memorize the movements one after the other in sequence. The third step is when you can memorize all movements, play the whole

set fluidly, then try to incorporate the movement with breathing.

This is the most crucial and beneficial act. You cannot get there if you quit.

Mamie Woo trained at China's Guangzhou College of Traditional Chinese Medicine. She is a Tai Chi instructor, Chinese herblist and certified massage therapist. Contact her at 616-1688; website: www.mamiechineseherbs.com.

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