

## The Only Bad Questions Are The Ones You Don't Ask

### Is there any special equipment needed?

No. You don't need any special uniform, belt or equipment. Just loose clothing and comfortable shoes.

### Do you have to be athletic to learn T'ai chi?

No. Absolutely anyone can learn. You can't be too young, too old, or too uncoordinated. T'ai Chi teaches coordination, balance and smooth, gentle movement. T'ai Chi works for everyone. The only people who do not benefit are those who do not practice regularly. You progress at your own pace.

### How long does it take to learn?

It takes several months or longer to learn the 88 movements of the New China Form. However, many people begin to experience the benefits in just a few weeks.

### Does T'ai Chi have any medical applications?

T'ai Chi has proven beneficial for people with chronic illnesses, pain and tension. Tai Chi is particularly valuable for the musculoskeletal system. Studies show it can minimize and prevent flexion deformity of the spine, improve skeletal muscle strength, limb coordination, joint range of motion and balance. Improvement in muscle power and decreased incidents of stumbling and falling have also been documented. T'ai Chi is also beneficial for increasing flexibility of the lumbar spine. It helps align the body's structure and harmonizes breathing with body movements. This keeps the thoracic cage mobile and respiratory muscles strong. Circulation increases and blood pressure frequently lowers. T'ai Chi has also been demonstrated to be effective with many orthopedic conditions and fibromyalgia. There has been work done with early Parkinson's disease and head trauma patients which shows promise.

### Is T'ai Chi a religion?

Absolutely not. Our practices use the Taoist philosophy of harmony, relaxation and mindfulness. These traits are compatible with and enhance all aspects of your life regardless of your personal beliefs or "Way."

### Is there a video available?

Yes! Chi Kung In Ten Gestures is an excellent resource. Please visit the website for more information.

If you have other questions please e-mail or call



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The poem "Full Circle" is by Jim Grossman and used with his permission. Thanks, Jim!



From darkness, light.  
From nothing, form.  
And back again . . . full circle.

In between life dances.  
Sinking, rising,  
Stepping, turning.

Yielding, we overcome.  
Bending, we stay straight.  
Emptying, we are fulfilled.  
Being less, we are more.

An invitation to explore the ancient,  
moving meditation of T'ai Chi Ch'uan

## The Gift of the Snake and the Crane

One spring day about 700 years ago, Chang San-feng stood motionless in the woods, staring into the clearing before him. For hours he watched as a snake and a crane sparred. Each time the snake struck, the crane simply waved its wings and danced out of the way. When the crane attacked, the snake gracefully slipped aside and the bird struck only air. Chang San-fen was deeply impressed by what he saw and, legend tells us, he used what he learned from the snake and crane to begin developing the art of Tai Chi Ch'uan.

Now, whether or not you buy into legends, it is true that Tai Chi Ch'uan was developed in Northern China some 700 years ago. At first, it was reserved for royal families because of the powerful minds and bodies that it created. But around the year 1900, Yang Chen Fu broke with tradition and began teaching the art to the public in order to realize his dream of strengthening his people and his country.

## Moving Meditation

There are four basic styles of Tai Chi Ch'uan: Chen, Sun, Wu and Yang. Each is named for the family that developed it. Full Circle Tai Chi uses a style called The New China Form (sometimes called Chen Synthetic) that is a synthesis of all four families' styles.

At Full Circle, we practice Tai Chi for its preventative and therapeutic benefits. Sometimes called moving meditation, Tai Chi is effective and appropriate for people of any age.

Unlike martial art programs that rely on

*"All the movements are composed of circles. A circle may be made from a point, and any point on that circle may form another circle; in this manner the process may go on infinitely."  
Y.L. Chen*

physical strength, Tai Chi focuses on developing power through relaxation, flexibility and mindfulness.

## Improve Body, Develop Mind

Tai Chi is based on the Taoist idea that the mind and body are one. We experience this when we react physically to emotional situations. When we cry at a wedding or funeral, laugh at a joke or become tense in heavy traffic we are having a physical reaction to our emotions. We experience the connection between our mind and body constantly.

Tai Chi is based on the fact that this connection works both ways. We can and do have emotional reactions to our physical movements. As we practice the movements of Tai Chi we are working the mind through the body. When the body relaxes, the mind relaxes. If we are physically balanced, we are mentally balanced. If we are physically open, we are mentally open. If we are physically connected, we are mentally connected. If we move with purpose, we will think with purpose.

## A New Way

Psychologists have told us that we have two possible reactions to stress: "fight or flight". Traffic, kids, bills, the boss . . . the list can seem endless. Since most of us are under stress daily, we are almost

*"For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill"  
Sun Tzu*

constantly in "fight or flight" mode.

Whether we choose to fight or run, our lives are still controlled by forces outside of our control. Either choice causes more stress. Clearly, this is not good for us physically, emotionally or spiritually. Tai Chi shows us we have another option: relax! With practice our unthinking, instinctual reaction to incoming stress can be to relax instead of tensing, If we relax physically we will be relaxed mentally. If we

can think clearly we can then choose our reaction to stress! This is a radical departure from the norm for most of us and it starts with the simple movements of Tai Chi.

## Limitless Energy

The New China form taught by Full Circle has 88 movements, or postures, which take about 10 minutes to perform. A complete workout, including the opening and closing Chi Kung or breathing exercise, takes as little as 1/2 hour.

Tai Chi keeps the body and the life energy, what

*"The mind leads and the chi follows. An intrinsic energy will be gradually developed which is tremendously powerful, strong, and limitless."  
T.T Liang*

the Chinese call "chi", fit. It raises the metabolism and benefits the cardiovascular system. It promotes muscle strength, control, coordination, relaxation and peace of mind. And, after practice, you

feel relaxed and energized instead of exhausted. The psychological and physiological benefits are far reaching.

## Are You Ready For Tai Chi?

I teach at the Life Care Center at 212 Kingwood Street, Brainerd. New students can start any time and you progress at your own pace. Classes are \$50 a month or \$15 an hour. Private or semi-private lessons are available. Please check the website, call or e-mail for current class schedules.

