

Still Mountain

T'ai Chi and Chi Kung Newsletter



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Current Class Schedule:

- T'ai Chi, Mondays @7:30 P.M.
- Chi Kung, Tuesdays @ 9:00 A.M.
- T'ai Chi, Tuesdays @ 7:00 P.M.
- Introduction to T'ai Chi and Chi Kung, Saturdays @10:00 A.M.
- Please call for other times and private lessons

Balancing T'ai Chi, by David Clippinger

After a particularly eventful day that included a surprise birthday party for my son as well as a visit from moody relatives, I happened to glance outside and caught the sun poised at the edge of a distant hill. It was half-exposed and half-obstructed by the hillside ten miles or more down the valley from my back deck. Half-there, half-gone, the sun was perfectly balanced before its final sinking below the horizon. At that moment, I arrived at a sense of balance that had eluded me throughout the day as if I had tapped into a moment of luminosity and universal harmony.

How rare are such moments of personal balance. How unexpected and yet fleeting do they seem in comparison to the constant ebb and flow of our days. And yet such balance is the essence of T'ai Chi, and such sustained and sustainable harmony is the secret and elusive meaning in the forms.

Balance in T'ai Chi might be construed as the physicality of keeping oneself in balance—the distribution of weight along the body's stance, which is called the "standing pole." The physi-

cal conception of balance is vital to T'ai Chi since there cannot be a flowing movement of the legs, torso, and arms without the act of balancing weight with counterweight. As the right arm extends forward, for example, that force is countered by the anchoring of the left leg behind.

Yet the balance of T'ai Chi extends beyond this physicality and the practicing of the forms. The striving for balance is the goal of life's universal "T'ai Chi"—the dance of yin and yang, positive and negative, dark and light, life and death. Within that dance as yin succumbs to yang, or light penetrates the dark, we seek to find our place within this process and to become the pivot of harmony.

So as we gaze out from beneath the canopy of the maple and white pine trees onto the hillside where the sun sets and we practice a move such as "Rising and Setting of Sun and Moon" or "Merging Heaven and Earth," we are not merely practicing an exercise that mimics nature, rather we are finding that place of balance within ourselves where the yin and yang, heaven and

earth, sun and moon, and other forces intersect and become us.

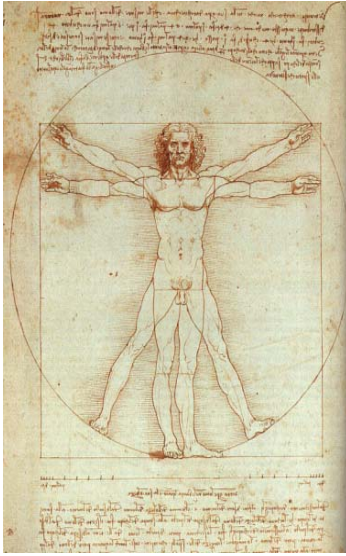
When we can bring ourselves with all of our emotions, history with others, and our personality into harmony with the world, then the moments of equilibrium in the world and within ourselves are revealed with greater frequency. When we have balance, T'ai Chi is no longer merely a martial art with inherent health benefits; rather, it is our life, and we become universal harmony—we become T'ai Chi.



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Medical Study Documents the Benefits of T'ai Chi



The positive mental, emotional, and physical impact of T'ai Chi and Chi Kung are well-known to those who practice these forms regularly. But now these benefits have been documented by Western Medical authorities. For example, an article in the March 8th, 2004 issue of the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, a journal of the American Medical Association and published under the auspices of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*

includes the essay "The Effect of Tai Chi on Health Outcomes in Patients with Chronic Conditions." That essay concludes that "Tai Chi appears to have physiological and psychosocial benefits and also appears to be safe and effective in promoting balance control, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness in older patients with chronic conditions." Further T'ai Chi develops "mind-body interaction, breathing regulation with

body movement, hand-eye coordination, and tranquilization."

Given these findings, many organizations and fitness centers such as the YMCA and the Shepherd Wellness Center are incorporating T'ai Chi and Chi Kung into their offerings. David teaches classes at the YMCA downtown on Monday evenings at 6:00 P.M. and Wednesday mornings at 10:30.



"Tai Chi [has] physiological and psychosocial benefits and also appears to be safe and effective in promoting balance control, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness." From *Archives of Internal Medicine*

I came to Chi Kung, after eight years of marrying the mind-body energies to accord with sitting Zen meditation. Chi Kung now helps me unify the mind-body energies while moving, and complements my Zen practice.

I began studying seated Chi Kung with Dr. Clippinger and soon after, began learn-

ing

White Crane Chi Kung, done while standing. Seated Chi Kung helps to awaken my body early in the morning before Zen practice. White Crane Chi Kung, with its wide-ranging movements, works better for me later in the day and enables the mind-body energies to keep flowing properly.

Just as important, seated Chi Kung and White Crane Chi Kung require me to attune breathing within each movement and to keep the body supple while doing so. As you might imagine, the effect relaxes body and mind, is enjoyable, and helps to release the stressors that come with an active life.



Upcoming Events



David will be teaching a number of seminars at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills (Sunnyhill) in the next few months:

- September 11, 2004 @ 1:00 will be an introduction to T'ai Chi and Chi Kung.
- October 23, 2004 @ 3:00

will be a special 8 pieces of Brocade seminar.

- On October 16, 2004, David will lead a Chi Kung seminar at the University of Pittsburgh Gallery of Art.
- A "T'ai Chi for Seniors" seminar as well as Adult T'ai Chi will begin in the

Fall at the Mt. Lebanon Recreation Center.

- In January, 2005, David will teach a ten-week Chi Kung class at the Shepherd Wellness Center in Bloomfield.

For information on any of the events, please contact David Clippinger @ (412) 480-9177.