

## Why Learn Tai Chi? By Caroline Demoise

The Chinese translate tai chi chuan (taijiquan) as the “supreme ultimate exercise” because it is for the mind, body and spirit. The mental focus and clarity of mind required to learn tai chi calms the central nervous system promoting both mental and physical relaxation. Tai chi can uplift the spirit and promote a sense of peace and tranquility in both the mind and the body, making it an excellent stress management tool for our modern lifestyle.

- Tai chi exercises and benefits all of the body’s vital internal organs.
- As you practice tai chi, you exercise all the muscles, joints and ligaments in your body.
- Tai chi is a suitable exercise for almost anyone, as the level of exertion can be adjusted to meet the person’s physical condition.
- Making tai chi part of your total fitness program will increase your overall muscle strength and stamina, as well as improve your coordination and balance.
- The abdominal breathing used in tai chi, provides more oxygen to the body, increasing both heart and lung function.
- Tai chi encourages the flow of vital energy in the body and promotes cardiovascular fitness.



What really makes tai chi so precious is its ability to unify the mind, body and spirit. When you learn tai chi you are creating a pathway to experience your essence and connect deeply to the silence within. This transformational experience is felt on the mental, physical and spiritual levels. Qi, or energy, is the connection that integrates the body, mind and spirit.

Tai chi is a martial art expression, an enjoyable fitness exercise with a multitude of health benefits, a living meditation, and a process of change that can be used to transform your life. Several million people worldwide practice it regularly to promote wellness. As the most famous internal Chinese martial art, it emphasizes abdominal breathing and involves your mind in conditioning your body. Movements are gentle and soft compared to the external martial arts. Being part of traditional Chinese medicine this art cultivates the life force in the body called “qi” encouraging it to flow unrestricted in your body and promoting health.

Essential principles in tai chi come from the ancient Chinese philosophy of Taoism which emphasize a natural balance in all things and the importance of living in spiritual and physical harmony with the patterns of nature. Central to this philosophy is the recognition that everything is composed of opposite and complementary conditions interacting in a balanced relationship flow called yin and yang. To understand yin and yang the western mind must approach the flow between these qualities or conditions from a perspective other than dualism, which sees them as different and opposite, and view yin and yang, masculine and feminine, light and dark, as complementary states that complete each other and create a whole when viewed from the perspective of unity. Embracing this perceptual difference is essential to experiencing an enlightened mind and the deeper levels of tai chi.

For information on Sun Style tai chi classes in Chapel Hill, appropriate for beginners and seniors, visit [www.innerpathtaichi.com](http://www.innerpathtaichi.com).