

4-67



Key requirements to the movement:

The waist should be the central axis of the movement. Both hands move in an arc in front of the body. Moving one step out and moving one step that crosses behind, together make one whole movement. When crossing behind keep space between the legs and step the toes one pace back. So in order to walk a straight line, to the left, the left foot must move slightly forward during each step subsequent to the first. It is normal to practice four sets but the number of sets can be varied to fit the available space.

Form 15

Turn Body with Double Lotus Kick

1 Carry on from the previous movement by pulling both hands to the back right of the body, with both arms rotating counter clockwise. At the same time turn the body to the right 180 degrees with the body initially turning on the left heel followed by turning on the right heel.

4-68



4-69



The right hand movement ends in front of the middle line of the chest with the palm facing upwards and right. The left hand movement ends in front of the left shoulder with the palm facing up. Eyes look forward-left. (Figure 4-68)

2 Transfer the weight to the right leg and turn the body to the right slightly. Lift the left foot keeping the knee bent then step forward-left with both palms pushing back and to the right. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-69)

4-70



3 Turn the body to the right and transfer the weight to the left leg. Turn both palms back in an arc then press down just beside the right waist. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-70)

4 Keep the weight on the left leg and lift the right foot up to the left of the body then kick up and swing the foot to the right side of the body. At the same time keep the space between the hands when both palms sweep across to the left and individually strike the outside of the right foot. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-71)

4-71



Key requirements to the movement:

The motion of sweeping the foot and striking the palms must be very fast and form a united strength throughout the body. The left hand strikes the foot in front of the body and the right hand strikes the foot at the right front (see illustration Figure 4-71). During this movement breathe in at the beginning and out at the end.

Form 16 Cannon Fist Over Head

1 Carrying on from the previous movement, with the right foot step back one step. Push both hands to the left with both arms rotating counter clockwise. The weight remains on the left leg. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-72)

Key requirements to the movement:

Keep balance during the foot movements. The hand moves forward along with the foot stepping back should be closed and co-ordinated. During this movement breathe in.

2 Turn your body to the right slightly and transfer your weight onto the right leg. At the same time pull both palms back in front of the right chest and change both palms into fists. Eyes look forward-left. (Figure 4-73)

Key requirements to the movement:

The movement of pulling both palms has to be co-ordinated with the weight transferring and the body turning. Do not bend the waist. During this movement, breathe in first then breathe out.

4-72



4-73



4-74



3 Push the right foot against the ground to power the body forward onto the left leg with the body turning to the left. As the body turns to the left both fists fling forward together with the eye of the fist facing upward (see diagram) and both fists facing each other. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-74)

Key requirements to the movement:

As soon as the mind decides to act, the fists follow instantly realizing energy and shaking powerfully. The movement looks like a golden lion shaking his mane and a powerful tiger jumping down a mountain. The shaking energy is sourced from the waist and hips and should reach the surface of the fists. During this movement breathe out.

Form 17 Buddha's Warrior Attendant Pounds Mortar

1 Carrying on from the previous movement change both fists into palms. Rotate both arms counter clockwise and pull both palms back leading up. At the same time transfer the weight to the right leg. Eyes look forward-left. (Figure 4-75)

4-75



2 Transfer the weight from the right leg onto the left leg. Place the whole left foot on the floor with the toes turned outward slightly. Whilst transferring the weight, turn the upper body to the left about 45 degrees, both palms move down and forward in an arc with both arms rotating clockwise. The left palm moves to the front of the left side of the chest, with the elbow bent and the palm facing down the right palm moves down to the front of the right leg above the knee with the palm facing outward and the fingers pointing behind. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-76/77)

4-76



Key requirements to the movement:

Turning the body, shifting the weight and moving the palms should be co-ordinated. Keep the pelvis down and move the hips forward. The left arm maintains a circular structure and keeps the 'peng' (outward push) strength throughout. Keep the right elbow about 8 to 10 centimeters away from the body. The left knee should align vertically above the left ankle. Do not let the knee protrude forward. The right knee is bent and the hips are relaxed. Maintain an arched structure to the legs throughout the movement. Breathe in at the beginning and out at the end of this movement.

4-77



3 Keeping the body weight on the left leg, step the right leg forward placing the toes on the ground to create an 'empty stance' (almost no weight on the right foot). At the same time the right hand follows the right leg forward in a rising arc, palm facing upwards in front of the right side of the chest. The fingers of the left hand lightly contact the right forearm. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-78)

4-78



Key requirements to the movement:

The right foot steps forward with the knees bent, hips relaxed and footwork light, flexible and natural. The movement of the arms co-ordinates with the rise and fall of the body. Breathe in during this movement.

4 The left palm turns upward and sinks down to the front of the lower abdomen. At the same time the right hand forms a fist. Lower the back of the fist into the opened left palm. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-79)

Key requirements to the movement:

Keep both hands and the abdomen about 8 to 10cm apart, both arms hold a feeling of rounded outward 'peng' strength. The waist sinks down as the fist lowers into the left palm. Breathe out during this movement.

5 Raise the right fist up to shoulder level in front of the body and at the same time, lift the right knee whilst maintaining relaxed hips and a bent left knee. The right toes point naturally downwards and the lower leg is turned slightly inward to a position close to the left knee. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-80)

4-79



Key requirements to the movement:

As the right hand and foot rise up, the left side sinks down. (One side of the body is in yin, the other is in yang.) Do not rise up on the supporting leg as the right knee lifts. The internal energy flows down along the body. As the fist rises, the shoulders stay relaxed and the right elbow is dropped down. Breathe in during this movement.

6 Stamp the right foot on the floor about shoulder-width apart from left foot and keep it firmly placed there. At the same time the back of the right fist strikes downward onto the center of the left palm, both arms are bent and maintain a feeling of rounded outward 'peng' strength. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-81)

Key requirements to the movement:

Stamping the foot and pounding the right fist is a co-ordinated power releasing movement. Keep the knees bent and the hips relaxed. The internal energy flows down to the Dantian. Breathe out during this movement.

4-80



4-81



Form 18 Finishing Form

1 Carrying on from the previous movement, change the right fist into a palm then split both palms with the body sinking down slightly. Bend the knees and relax the hips. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-82)

4-82



4-83



Key requirements to the movement:

While both palms are splitting and the body is sinking down, keep the back upright and do not bend the waist. During this movement breathe in.

2 Carry on to split both hands to both sides of the body and bring them up to shoulder level then turn both the palms over so they are facing downward ending in front of both shoulders. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-83)

Key requirements to the movement:

While both hands rise up, relax your shoulders and sink the elbow down with the muscles on the chest, abdomen, back and every other part of the body remaining relaxed and sunken. During this movement carry on breathing in.

3 Press both palms down along both sides of the body and end when they are resting at the side of the body. Eyes look forward. (Figure 4-84)

Key requirements to the movement:

While pressing both palms down, breathe out and relax the whole body. The Qi energy will return back to the Dantian (lower abdomen) and the body along with the spirit will become one entity. When you finish the whole series of movements the heart should be quiet and the breathing should be smooth. The movements are continuous -harmonious, with the Qi energy flowing throughout the whole exercise.

4 Return the body slowly to the normal standing position. Eyes look forward and the practice of Taijiquan is completed. (Figure 4-85)

This ends the 18 Short Form

4-84



4-85





Chapter Five

Views from the West

What is Tai Chi? How does Tai Chi relate to your daily life? What are the benefits? Is Tai Chi really good for us or is it just for Chinese people? In this chapter we asked some people from the West to try and answer these questions for you from their own experiences and knowledge.

Section One: A Tai Chi Journey

By Dan Chisholm

In this chapter I will offer a glimpse into the early stages of training, explain the initial phases you will go through and introduce some of the benefits that I have experienced during a decade of training.

Whether old or young, everyone must start at the very beginning. Even the greatest masters were once in the same position that you are now. There are no magic formulas or secret methods to speed up progress, only the requirement of regular study and the guidance from a knowledgeable teacher. Once you begin, you will dive beneath the surface to explore the depths of this fascinating art.

Why Learn Tai Chi?

Most people do not have a clear understanding of Tai Chi. The majority who study see it as a soft and slow exercise with relaxation being the final goal and objective. This concept, whilst being partly correct, is only the first phase of training and barely scratches the surface of a mystical art that extends beyond just physical conditioning. When studying Tai Chi the final objective is to access higher aspects of the self and stimulate latent spiritual abilities using the fusion of body, mind and breath in a form of dynamic meditation.



At advanced levels the movements can be performed at any speed. Blending fast and slow, with softness and hardness in a balanced and energetic fluidity that

adheres precisely with the ancient Taoist philosophical principles of Yin and Yang. Progress occurs gradually but with patience you will develop a deep understanding of form, movement and internal energy that will generate a wealth of benefits.

Chen Style Tai Chi can be studied all one's life. This complete exercise system contains similar benefits found in both Yoga and Pilates, but includes the additional component of self-defence. Benefits become more profound the longer one studies and includes optimizing health, developing martial skill through the use of internal energy and stimulating spiritual awareness.

Starting Out

In the beginning it is important to learn the basics. Warm-up exercises are studied and begin to promote well-being once simple breathing techniques are employed. Following these initial warm-up routines, silk-reeling energy exercises are introduced. These exercises form the foundation of the longer routines and will help the student to understand the characteristic movements and techniques used. Each exercise is typically undertaken in a fixed position and allows the student to experience a basic level of relaxation and fluidity that will form the basis of their understanding. When learning these techniques you will become immediately aware just how subtle the movements are and how challenging, both physically and mentally, Tai Chi can be. This introduction to Tai Chi is essential and will give students an appreciation of what is involved when studying the more complicated routines.

As a beginner it is important to understand what Tai Chi is, what the fundamental principles are and also what you want to achieve from your practice. If you want good health and a little light exercise, then you need not practice so hard. However, if you want to reach higher levels, then the effort and dedication required will be greater. This is an individual choice and whatever path you take you will accumulate benefits.

I have found through my own teaching that many of my students start practicing Tai Chi as a way to relax and unwind. However, after a short period of study they begin to experience some of the early benefits and then wish to explore a little further.

During this early phase you should begin to develop the ability to relax, both physically and mentally. Movements are performed slowly and softly to draw your attention to areas of stiffness within the body. Once this stiffness is recognised, you can begin to eliminate it and re-educate your body to remain relaxed and to use softness in preference to stiffness.

Initially you will find it difficult to remain relaxed and loose, since stiffness dominates every action you undertake. We are all taught to use stiffness from a young age and unfortunately, this automatic response restricts the circulation of blood and energy. The effect on our circulation by tensing the muscles is like clasping your hands tightly around a hosepipe and squeezing until the flow of

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water is reduced. This harmful automatic response affects our physical and mental health and must be altered if the maximum benefits from Tai Chi practice are to be achieved. Once our hands (muscles) relax, the water begins to flow naturally again and circulation is restored to normal.

By correcting a student's understanding and letting them experience what relaxation is, they will begin to gain benefits. It is not easy to make this concept clear and even students who have practiced Tai Chi for many years may not fully understand it.

With regular training and careful guidance you will slowly apply this understanding to each movement. Every action will become softer until all movements are made in total relaxation. By heightening your awareness you will be able to apply this principle of relaxation to all areas of your life.

Tai Chi as Meditation

Tai Chi should be thought of as a form of dynamic meditation. Most people think meditation is a practice that involves sitting down with your legs crossed; but meditation should not be confined to just this single activity.

The intricate nature of the Tai Chi routines require the complete co-ordination of mind, body and breath with every action. Through regular repetition these actions become ingrained in the body to allow the mind to focus clearly on their intention and application. Once relaxation and intention are combined, distractive thoughts are removed, internal energy is awakened and a state of meditation is created.

Tai Chi exercises not only teach you to focus the mind but also to create a strong posture - one of the basic requirements for meditation. During seated meditation your body should be strong (but not stiff) to maintain a vertical position of the spine. With correct training your body will gradually become accustomed to holding this posture. Once relaxed, energy will begin to rise up your spine to stimulate the higher energy centres.

Most students will notice the similarity between sitting meditation and the static Tai Chi posture, since no movement occurs. However, students do not seem to associate the flowing movements of the Tai Chi routines in the same way. A student should be able to create the same sensations of energy flow that are experienced during seated meditation in all forms of Tai Chi practice.

At more advanced stages internal energy is stimulated and then circulated. This flow of energy becomes an integral part of the body that initiates movement

within the form. This fluidity of action will have a calming meditative influence on the individual practicing but also on those watching - allowing others to benefit from your practice as well.

Early Signs of Progress

As a beginner you will experience a variety of sensations that may excite or confuse you. They are all in fact quite harmless and are just signs to indicate that higher levels are being attained. Some of the early sensations that occur during practice include tingling and sweating, caused by heat generated within the body. These sensations are common and will gradually disappear over time as your body becomes stronger and more accustomed to enhanced circulation of blood and energy.

Of all the techniques learnt in the early stages, the static postures are the most important since they encourage greater internal awareness. By gradually increasing the length of time that you are able to hold these postures, you will begin to produce similar sensations to those indicated below:

1 Relaxing your upper body and sinking at the waist produces a feeling of being strongly rooted to the floor, like being stuck to the floor with glue. This sensation is accompanied by an intense heat in the sole of the foot and is a good indication that blood and energy are circulating freely. These feelings are experienced whilst practicing static postures but are also felt when performing the Tai Chi routines slowly.

2 The standing postures often create a feeling of hot water being poured into the legs. This feeling rises from the feet and begins to fill the thighs. By relaxing, this heat travels up the back and surges over the top of the head and is sometimes combined with a trembling of the thighs. At other times an intense heat swirls and pulsates around the body as it begins to fill the channels with energy, in the same way tributaries are filled following heavy rainfall. These sensations are quite normal and are associated with a feeling of lightness in the upper body and total contentment and connection to your surroundings.

3 Undertaking regular posture training produces strong feelings of energy circulating within, like having a warm river of electricity, or magnetic oil, passing inside your body. This sensation permeates both bone and muscle with a strong vibrating energy. These sensations are astonishing and develop a feeling of internal strength and fluidity of movement that provides great encouragement to continue with your studies.





4 The Tai Chi posture is the simplest to learn, but often the most difficult to perfect. As your body begins to relax from regular training, internal energy begins to circulate freely within. Your skin will become highly sensitive and produces a subtle feeling of warm magnetism surrounding the body, like a "Ready-Brek Glow". This energy strengthens your body and provides protection from the invasion of harmful external pathogens, such as infections and viruses and is one of the important benefits to help strengthen your immune system.

After several years of continued practice your overall ability in the Tai Chi forms and postures will advance. This growth brings with it stronger and more intense feelings that will vary depending upon the health and vitality of each student.

Higher Levels of Development

Once you become confident and capable in the Tai Chi forms you can begin to apply greater emphasis on the internal aspect of the art.

Through studying Tai Chi you build an awareness of a universal energy that surrounds and permeates us. The training methods help you to access this universal energy like tuning into your favorite radio station and once you receive a strong signal, your movements will begin to flow powerfully.

When the body is soft and flexible, this energy is directed to the extremities in wave-like-pulses, similar to the action of cracking a whip. This wave starts from the feet, travels to the waist and radiates from this central hub, spiraling through the limbs. Unique twisting actions found in Chen Style Tai Chi encourage this energy to travel through the limbs and enhances this flow naturally. This process is only possible once your body is loose and is why so much emphasis is placed on relaxation during the first phase of training.

Once internal energy flow is experienced, the martial application behind the movements becomes clearer. This energy appears gradually and enhances the momentum and fluidity of every action performed. It will take a while for you to reach this level of understanding but it is worth every ounce of practice. As you approach this stage in your training you will begin to see the usefulness of Tai Chi and its effectiveness in a self-defence situation.

During this phase of training your state of mind will play a vital role in your progress. You must first develop the belief that you are capable of performing the movements and with this confidence the seed of intention is sown. If

nurtured, it will grow to have a profound influence, not just on your movement, but also in all aspects of your life. Tai Chi promotes a positive outlook and encourages an enthusiasm for life that opens the door for you to explore the furthest reaches of your potential. This outlook will reflect in your behavior towards others and reinforces the feeling of being connected, not isolated from the world you live in.

Benefits from Higher Stages of Practice

The benefits gained during this stage of practice are due to increased levels of energy that circulate through your body's energetic pathways. Relaxation allows this energy to flow and once abundant, is drawn up the spine as a river of vibrating energy, like rising steam. This condensed vapour nourishes your kidneys on its journey to the higher energy centres of the brain before descending vertically down the front of the body, cascading through the throat and chest until it reaches your dantian (abdominal area), where it is drawn into another circuit.

This transportation system occurs in the same way that water from the ocean evaporates, traveling in the form of clouds and cascading as rain on the earth, until eventually returning back to the sea again by means of streams and rivers. This action will continue to nourish your whole body, as long as your energy remains strong and the body and mind are relaxed and calm.

Tai Chi was developed with a profound understanding of these energetic pathways. Through unique spiraling actions found in Chen Style Tai Chi these pathways are freed from blockages to allow energy and fluid to flow smoothly. Once this occurs, your body returns to its original state of optimum health.

Every movement you undertake reinforces the opening and clearing of these pathways, in the same way a Chinese doctor would aim to do using Acupuncture or Tui Na massage. Tai Chi exercises have been used for centuries as an effective supplement to Chinese Medicine, used to strengthen the body and to promote a long and healthy life.

In Conclusion

One should always be aware that Tai Chi is in the body, not in the mind. You may read and theorize about it, but a true understanding only comes from continued practice. Just keep reminding yourself of the old saying "practice makes perfect".

I am very fortunate to have begun my own journey under the guidance of two exceptional teachers, Master Liming Yue and Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei. This level of instruction has given me a deeper understanding of this incredible art and I will be forever grateful for all that I have been taught. Even after a decade of training, I am still enthusiastic and excited in what lies ahead, always aware just how much there is still to learn.

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Section Two

Tui Na Chinese Massage and Chen Style Taijiquan

By Nick Taylor

What do Tui Na Chinese massage and Taijiquan have in common? They have their origins rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and both utilize similar techniques for improving health, fitness and longevity. This chapter is an introduction to Tui Na, a comparison of some of the techniques employed within both disciplines, and an explanation of the health benefits arising from these remarkable skills.

The Discovery

From my early days of training with Master Liming Yue, I still recall the powerful and energetic feelings I enjoyed after each Taijiquan class. I felt more energized, calm, relaxed and happy, even if it was hard work. These benefits came from simple, effective exercises, created hundreds of years ago in China. Throughout a decade of training in Taijiquan, my interest in Chinese culture, especially the health and medical aspects, deepened. It was during this period that I heard about something called Tai Chi massage from Master Liming Yue and other Taijiquan masters. Correctly called Tui Na, my first Tai Chi massage was amazing, great movements of Qi energy flowed up and down my spine, throughout my back, and I felt calm and more relaxed. These sensations I recognized as similar to those that I had experienced during my Taijiquan practice. This discovery encouraged me to train in Tui Na Chinese massage, and to eventual qualification as a Tui Na Master Practitioner.

Tui Na Chinese Massage

Tui Na (pronounced twee nah) simply means to push and grasp. Powerful and effective, Tui Na is used to remedy training injuries, heal the body, improve health by balancing Qi energy and stimulate the immune system. For many high level practitioners of Taijiquan, the use of Tui Na is also important in support of their training routine. Tui Na is a branch of Chinese medicine that is guided by the theories of Traditional Chinese Medicine and is equal in importance to acupuncture and herbal treatment for the maintenance of good health, balance and harmony. Traditional Chinese Medicine is founded on the concepts of treating the body as an integrated whole, the theory of Yin and Yang, and understanding the meridians through which Qi energy flows.

An important feature of Tui Na is that the practitioner stands in a relaxed, stable posture. This enhances the benefits gained from the four main features of Tui Na

techniques, which are rhythm, frequency, duration and strength. Adopting the correct posture also helps the practitioner enter into a quiescent state, and by relaxing the body, enables Qi energy to descend to the dantien. In this state of mind, combined with regular, even breathing, the practitioner guides their Qi energy and the power of the whole body into the hands, further empowering the treatment. These skills can be developed and greatly enhanced through the practice and study of Chen Style Taijiquan.

The Healing Effects of Tui Na Chinese Massage

The curative qualities and medical benefits of Tui Na Chinese massage can be applied to injuries, and acute or chronic conditions, both physical and emotional. Tui Na successfully treats stress, migraine, headache, insomnia, tension and restlessness. It is effective in treating repetitive strain injuries such as tenosynovitis, bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow and golfers elbow. Tui Na relieves the pain of cervical spondylosis, acute lumbar strain, prolapsed intervertebral lumbar disc (slipped disc), stiff neck, whiplash injury and sacro-iliac joint problems. Rheumatoid arthritis, spinal osteoarthritis, facial paralysis, and torticollis also respond well to Tui Na. Tui Na works well in the treatment of sports injuries. As a result of the improved flow of Qi energy stimulated by the massage techniques, the healing process is enhanced, especially for the inert connective tissues such as tendons, ligaments and cartilage.



The development of unhindered, smooth flowing Qi energy through Tui Na Chinese massage is appropriate for healing specific medical conditions and for self-maintenance by Taijiquan practitioners. It has an ability to improve physical performance, aids all sports people and creates a healthier, more active life for friends and family. The physical benefits of Tui Na treatments are enjoyable for those in need of healing and pain release, and also for improving the general quality of life.

Tui Na Techniques and Chen Style Taijiquan

The Tui Na manipulations discussed here are some of the many standard technical maneuvers used for treating injuries, improving health and balancing Qi. The Tai Chi forms movement Cover Fist and Punch, prepares for, and then releases energy. The right fist strikes out forwards, and at the same time the left elbow strikes backwards. This form contains similar movement properties as the Tui Na manipulations Ban, to pull, and Bashen, to pull/extend. Here, the main principle is a firm pull by the Tui Na practitioner at



both ends of a joint, in opposite directions. This effect can also be achieved during many of the other powerful, energy release, Fa Jing movements characteristic of Chen Style Taijiquan. The medical benefits achieved from this Tai Chi strike/Tui Na manipulation include a reduction in articular disturbances. These are partial dislocations of the shoulder joint, which can become fixed, causing osteoarthritis and a loss of articular surface on the head of the humerus. Articular adhesion (common cause of frozen shoulder) can also be corrected, and lubrication of the joints improved. The effects of physical deformities are rectified and the normal range of motion restored to joints. Other health benefits include the treatment and repair of injured soft tissues, and the alleviation of nerve compression. Nerve compression can cause problems such as numbness and tingling in the hands, arms, legs and feet. Further advantage gained from this type of Tai Chi strike/Tui Na manipulation is a widening of the joint spaces, allowing more Qi energy to flow through, fill the joint and clear energetic blockages. This can also enhance joint lubrication, reduce inflammation and help to improve cartilage protection. In addition the tendons are stretched, helping to improve their strength and flexibility.

The Chen Style Tai Chi Warm Up exercises which include circling the waist, knee exercises, elbow circling around the shoulder, circling the head, arm circling around the elbow, and wrist rotation contain similar movement properties as the Tui Na manipulation Yao, to rotate. The massage techniques flex, extend and rotate the body within the normal range of movement. The medical benefits available from both approaches include improving the function of the joints, reducing stiffness and soreness, and treating articular adhesion. Other effective improvements to health that can be achieved apply to acute sports injuries, such as muscle strain involving myofascial damage and limited muscle fibre injury, repetitive strain injury, tendinitis, tennis elbow, golfers elbow and also osteo-arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. These Chen Style Taijiquan exercises and Tui Na manipulations also prepare the joints of the body for relaxing and opening up, creating the situation in which joint spaces can increase, allowing for improved Qi energy flow. The side to side twist of the upper body in the Warm Up exercises also contains similar attributes as the Tui Na shoulder to hip spinal twist manipulation, which is used for treating chronic lower lumbar pain and sciatica.

In general, the spiraling and circular movements characteristic of Chen Style Taijiquan cause the arms and shoulder joints to move in flexion/extension, abduction/adduction and in circumduction. In turn, the musculature of the upper arm, shoulder, upper back and scapula continuously stretch and relax. The scapula, suspended in a network of muscles, tendons and ligaments can be elevated, depressed, moved laterally or medially and rotated towards or away from the spine. All of these complex movements greatly assist in soothing and releasing upper back tension, allowing for a normalization in the flow of Qi energy, and improving blood circulation. Also enhanced is the flow of lymph fluid, which

transports essential vitamins to the blood, facilitates immune responses and drains excess interstitial fluid from tissue spaces. During the course of a Tui Na shoulder and upper back treatment, similar health benefits are achieved, with the addition of the wonderful feelings of increased energy typically experienced after a Tui Na treatment.

The spiraling and circular actions that are key components of Chen Style Taijiquan and Silk Reeling exercises contain within them the self-defence elements called Peng (ward off), Lu (roll back), Ji (squeeze) and An (press). In combination, the arm and hand movements display similar properties as the Tui Na manipulation Gung Fa. In the manipulation Gung Fa, also called Chinese rolling, the back of the hand rolls backward and forwards repetitively, in a smooth rhythmic manner. The effectiveness of this manipulation is achieved through the frequency of repetition, and the integrated and relaxed use of the whole body to deliver different levels of power. Starting at the shoulder, the rolling movement continues through the upper arm, into the elbow, is amplified by the forearm, which gently rotates inward and outward, and then transferred through rotation and flexion of the wrist to the hand. The medical health benefits gained from either the Tai Chi or Tui Na approach include a relaxation of the muscles and tendons, helping to reduce and eliminate the painful effects of repetitive strain injuries. In particular, Gung Fa helps to increase the flow of Qi energy, which helps to warm the meridians and dispel dampness.

The dynamic, flowing movement of the Warm Up exercises, Tai Chi forms and Silk Reeling exercises improve blood circulation and Qi energy flow. The Tui Na manipulations Yao, (rotate), Gung Fa, (rolling), Pai, (pat), Dou, (shake) Tui, (push) Na, (grasp), and Ca, (rub), all play a part in regulating and balancing the flow of Qi energy and blood. The act of doing some form of exercise increases the heart rate and blood flow. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, blood and Qi are considered interdependent. They have a unique relationship whereby Qi creates and promotes blood circulation and is said to be the commander of the blood. Qi receives its nourishment and nutrition from blood. Blood is said to be the mother of Qi. Qi invigorates blood and Qi deficiency can result in blood stagnation or some form of blood deficiency. Blood is Yin and Qi is Yang. In partnership or individually, Tai Chi and Tui Na create an improvement in Qi and blood circulation, enabling the whole body to fulfil its metabolic activities. Regular Taijiquan practice can also improve the condition known as Raynauds Disease. This disease affects the blood supply to the fingers and toes, with accompanying skin colour changes, coldness and numbness. It is believed that poor circulation and emotions such as stress and anxiety contribute to this disease. Tui Na can also ameliorate this condition through the massage techniques and the accompanying boost to the immune system typical after a treatment.





Individual Taijiquan practice strengthens and harmonizes the body, helping to protect it from disease and restore good health. A Tui Na practitioner enables the individual to achieve good health, eliminate disease and maintain homeostasis. Tui Na Chinese massage is treatment specific, boosts the immune system and is a holistic method of natural healthcare. This baton of good health is then sustained and improved upon by regular Taijiquan practice. Both methods use the same Qi energy principle discovered by the ancients, thousands of years ago. In my experience as a Taijiquan Instructor and Tui Na Practitioner I see the two disciplines as being vital strands in the quest for a healthy life, woven from the same braid of knowledge.

For further reading and reference, the following books will be useful to the reader: *The Web That Has No Weaver* by Ted J. Kaptchuk; *Fundamentals of Chinese Medicine* by Nigel Wiseman & Andrew Ellis; *Chinese Tui Na Massage* by Xu, Xiangcai; *Chinese Tuina Therapy* by Wang Fu; *The Seirin Pictorial Atlas of Acupuncture* by Yu-Lin Lian.

Section Three Managing Stress with Tai Chi By Bill Wilkinson

What is stress?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them".

Pressure is part and parcel of daily life and helps to keep us motivated both in our work and social lives. But excessive pressure can lead to stress that undermines performance, is costly to employers and can make people ill.

Why do we need to tackle stress?

HSE commissioned research has indicated that:

About half a million people in the UK experience work-related stress at a level they believe is making them ill.

Up to 5 million people in the UK feel "very" or "extremely" stressed by their work; and a total of 12.8 million days were lost to stress, depression and anxiety in 2003/4.

HSE key messages on stress:

HSE is working with businesses to enable them to manage work related stress more effectively.

Work related stress is a serious problem. Tackling it effectively can lead to significant benefits for organizations. There are practical things that organizations can do to prevent and control work related stress. Stress is a management issue which managers can help to resolve.

Everyday an estimated 270,00 employees are absent from work because of work related stress. However, only 13% of companies have implemented schemes to combat it. Stress at work is still not taken seriously despite its being one of the biggest problems facing employers and employees in the workplace today. Despite the cost to the "bottom line" in terms of increased cost and lost revenue in productivity, companies in the UK are doing little to deal with this growing threat.

We will all have suffered from some form of stress in our working lives, whether knowing it or not. In these hectic times, stress isn't limited to the office. HSE also commissioned some research which identified that those working in the education sector, including non-teaching staff, are some of the most likely to be exposed to psychosocial hazards that can lead to work related stress. Furthermore, 42% of teachers and 23% of those in education and welfare roles report high levels of stress.

Additionally, there have been many studies conducted on the effects of stress on schoolchildren. Some research has even suggested that over 90% of schoolchildren feel stressed at school, the main reason often cited is doing well at school. In the year April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004, more than 900 children and young people called Child-Line, the free 24 hour help-line, about the stress caused by their exams - up from just over 600 in the previous 12 months.

If the Government's own research through the HSE has estimated that 1 in 5 people are stressed at work, then we have a significant potential health problem looming in the UK. The Revitalizing Health and Safety Strategy was launched jointly by the Government and the Health and Safety Commission on 7 June 2000. It is a 10 year strategy seeking to make significant improvements in workplace health and safety by setting targets for reducing incidences of work related ill-health and working days lost caused by injury and ill-health.

The targets to meet by 2010 relating to work-related stress include:

A 20% reduction in the incidence of work-related ill health and a 30% reduction in the number of work days lost due to work-related ill health. That people not working due to ill health or disability are given opportunities for rehabilitation back into work or offered opportunities to prepare for and find employment.

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Tai Chi For Health

Wonderful feeling of Tai Chi spirit

From an employers point of view, this focus by the government on improving the incidences of work related stress should be seen as a positive step. An Employee Well Being programme in the workplace could have a significant effect on the profitability of a company by:

Reducing absence rates through stress management techniques which will reduce costs by spending less on other employees having to work overtime to cover the absentee.

Reducing turnover as employees are more motivated to stay with a caring employer will reduce the costs of recruitment, selection and training.

Improving productivity through more staff being at work at any one time.

These three positive outcomes contribute to a reduction in costs and an increase in income, resulting in an improved profit line for a company. However, companies need to invest time and money in looking for a solution that will help their employees.

So what is stress and what problems both mental and physical can develop? The body has an inbuilt physical response to stressful situations. Faced with pressure, challenge or danger, we need to react quickly, and our bodies release hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline to help us do this. These hormones are part of the "fight or flight" response and affect the metabolic rate, heart rate and blood pressure, resulting in a heightened - or stressed - state that prepares the body for optimum performance in dealing with a stressful situation.

Very often, modern stresses do not call for either fight or flight. Nevertheless, the same stressing hormones are released as part of the reaction and this natural reaction to challenge or danger, instead of helping, can damage health and reduce the ability to cope.

In the wake of the growing number of individuals experiencing stress at a potentially problematic level at home and in the work place, stress counselors and stress management companies are mushrooming. They promote their solutions to companies to help them manage this deteriorating situation.

Most of us at some time feel the pressures of modern life. We exercise a lot less



than our parents and grandparents. Trying to achieve a reasonable work/home balance can often prove very challenging. Most of the time we manage to "cope" with the situations we are in. However, for some people it has become so difficult that they look for some respite in drink or even drugs. All of these things are contributing to an increasingly unhealthy lifestyle, which makes us less able to deal with stress on a physical as well as an emotional level.

So how can Tai Chi help?

From my own personal experience, I have found that Tai Chi has helped me to cope with a full time, very demanding, professional job working for one of the UK's leading banks. My wife (who also has a very demanding job as a Director) and I have raised two daughters so we are both fully aware of the stresses that people are being confronted with on a day-to-day basis.

We both took up Tai Chi at the same time over five years ago, firstly with Steve Burton in Accrington and then Master Liming Yue in Manchester Tai Chi Centre. I have an old injury to my back and my physiotherapist recommended Tai Chi for its health promoting benefits. Over this period, we have both found that the regular practice of Tai Chi and particularly Qigong has enabled us to relax both physically and emotionally. The meditative practices of Qigong provide a very welcome opportunity to take some time out and try to understand the tensions and stresses that exist in our bodies.

According to Master Liming Yue, Tai Chi can have a dramatic effect on people's health. When practicing Tai Chi, the practitioner's consciousness, breathing and actions are all closely connected. Tai Chi exercises stimulate both blood circulation and the internal organs, as well as improving strength and muscle control. Tai Chi helps to improve health, co-ordination and posture along with enhancements to general fitness and weight loss. It stimulates the body and calms the mind, resulting in a balanced outlook and an overall improved sense of well being.

It helps mind and body to relax. I used to think that I was able to relax but since I started practicing Tai Chi, I soon realized that my body was in a permanent state of tension caused by the conscious and subconscious stresses of everyday life. Left unattended these stresses can cause long-term damage and ill health, as previously discussed.

Practicing Tai Chi has not prevented stress happening in my life whether at work or at home. It is not a panacea for all personal issues. What it can do is improve physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being. In helping to relax body and mind, it has put me in a better position to cope with the demands that are being placed on my body. It helps maintain my body in a better condition, thus helping the body to reduce the risks of more permanent damage that stress can cause. Stress is a major cause of illness and ill health. It is also a significant reason for ill health in the work place. So much so that companies in the UK are looking for some solutions to reduce the incidences of absence and to meet the Governments

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challenging targets. Tai Chi is ideal for the workplace as it is so simple to incorporate. It is surprising that more companies have not instituted this sensible programme for keeping their employees fit. On a practical note, there is no need for expensive gymnasiums, equipment, showers or sportswear. It can be practiced on your own in the workplace or as part of an organized class during the working day.

Equally, in the school playground, whether as a teacher, assistant or a pupil, Tai Chi exercise can have a very positive effect on improving the behaviour of school-children. Teachers at a primary school in Wiltshire introduced Tai Chi classes in 2000 to encourage children to concentrate on their lessons. 48 pupils at a Church of England school took part in exercise sessions

every morning before classes started. BBC news reported a teacher as saying, "After doing their Tai Chi the children come into the classroom and it really quietens them down - they are more prepared for their work and it creates a better atmosphere in the school."

Whether at work or in school, regular practice of Tai Chi can help your body to minimize the longer term damaging effects that stress can cause. Solutions that help companies and schools deal with the human and financial costs involved in stress related illness or activity would be welcomed. At an individual level, regular practice may also help put some of the issues or problems that you are facing into perspective by enabling you to relax more deeply both physically and mentally.

Acknowledgments:

Health and Safety Executive: Work-related stress; Health and Safety Executive's research in "The Scale of Occupational Stress", CRR 311/2000; Teacher Support Network: BBC News Archive- Education-18/9/2000

Section Four
Tai Chi & Qigong for the Elderly

By Sifu Steven Burton

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There are many millions of people of all ages who practice Tai Chi and Qigong around the world. These people find that the health benefits they gain last everyday throughout their life.

The Western perception of Chinese people practicing in the parks early morning is almost mystical yet this wonderful art is accessible to each and every one of us.

You can perform Tai Chi well into your eighties and nineties and receive its life sustaining health care benefits. Could the same be said for jogging, weight lifting, and aerobics? Due to the harsh impact nature of jogging and many other exercises, during the long term the joints suffer whereas with Tai Chi and Qigong your physical and mental health is maintained and improved.

To illustrate all the benefits would take an encyclopedia, but I will focus on some of the key benefits that can be derived from regular practice.

Benefits include:

1. Prevention or therapy of arthritic pain.
2. Improved balance
3. Reduced stress levels
4. Improved blood circulation and general cardiovascular system
5. More efficient breathing
6. Maintenance and improvement in co-ordination
7. Strengthening of the immune system
8. Increased mobility and flexibility

Pain free movement:

When practicing the slow rhythmical movements of Tai Chi all the joints of the body are worked gently through their natural range of motion. It is a well known fact that one must keep joints mobile to ease or prevent arthritic pain. Many physiotherapists would give gentle exercises to mobilize the joints and therefore I see Tai Chi as being a kind of D.I.Y physiotherapy. In medical terms the movements of Tai Chi will cause the bodies synovia membranes to produce the lubricant (synovia fluid) within the joints and thus allow the joints to "glide" more easily.

Balance for life:

A study at Emory University shows significant decrease in the incidents of falling after practicing the ancient art of Tai Chi.



The Emory study looked at seven therapeutic benefits for Tai Chi:

1. Continuous movement.
2. Small to large degrees of motion depending on the individual.
3. Flexed knees with distinct weight shifts between legs.
4. Straightening and extending head and trunk for less 'flexed' posture. Attention developed to prevent leaning of trunk or protrusion of the sacrum.
5. Trunk and head rotates as a unit during circular movements that emphasize rotation. Eyes follow movement, promoting head and trunk rotation through eye centering and eye movements.
6. Asymmetrical and diagonal arm and leg movements promote arm swing and rotation around the waist axis.
7. Unilateral weight bearing with constant shifting to and from right and left legs to build strength for unilateral weight bearing and improve unilateral balance through knowledge of one's balance limitations and practice of movements within those limitations.

The core principles of Tai Chi and Qigong are posture alignment controlled movement. The very nature of Tai Chi exercise is to work on core stability and balance. Tai Chi practice makes people feel more confident about movement and posture through practice and therefore as quite a number of falls are caused by lack of confidence this is one way falls are prevented as one's confidence improves.

The power of breath:

One of the most essential ingredients for performing at your best is to understand the proper and most efficient way to breathe. Whatever you do from walking to more vigorous activities, proper breathing is essential for success. Tai Chi and Qigong incorporates this necessary ingredient through full deep abdominal breathing and knowing when to inhale and exhale for each movement. Unfortunately, most people do not know how to breathe correctly.



Look at babies for the correct method of breathing, babies are not taught how to breathe at birth, it just happens. Their little bellies are pumping away giving them optimal energy. Their arms and legs move freely with ease. As we get older many people tend to restrict their breathing. People begin shallow breathing from their chests only. This limited kind of breathing puts a limit to our bodies natural potential. Breath is life! The value of deep abdominal breathing as we practice in Tai Chi, is essential for increasing your quality of life more than you would believe.

Through improved breathing and gentle movement comes stimulation of the circulation and as we breathe the body becomes energized due to the increase in oxygen to the lungs and continuing the journey, through to every cell of our bodies.

As our blood carries oxygen around our bodies and through deep Qigong breathing our lungs are working more efficiently it is easy to see that this alone justifies why we should practice Tai Chi. Tai Chi nourishes our bodies and WILL improve your life if practiced regularly.

Correct diaphragmatic breathing can also improve back pain due to the fact that the diaphragm has connective tissue to the lumbar spine and correct breathing can cause one to relax the muscles in the back.

Due to the very nature of relaxed controlled breathing the practitioner will find themselves in a state of both mental and physical relaxation which in turn can help to regulate blood pressure as stress levels reduce. Breath is Life !

In fact the rhythmical movement of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles during correct breathing could be said to massage the internal organs such as the intestines liver, stomach, etc. & therefore keep the internal organs healthy.

The amazing immune system:

Our bodies naturally have an amazing ability to regenerate tissue if damaged and to combat illness of many sorts. Unfortunately, due to today's society and dietary trends, our immune system tends not to work as efficiently as it can.

During Qigong and Tai Chi practice one of the requirements of training is that the tip of the tongue is placed gently to the roof of the mouth. There are many physical and meta-physical benefits of doing so. The main one that I will focus on is the fact that by placing the tongue thus causes the saliva production to increase. Within saliva there is an enzyme called 'amylase' which is responsible for the first stages of digestion. This is one of the reasons why it is recommended to thoroughly chew food before swallowing it, as the amylase mixes with the food and begins the digestion process. A healthy digestive system means a strong immune system.



Medisch Dossier (volume 6, number 7), a Dutch medical newsletter, reports on a study where a group of older men and women (average age of 70) practiced Tai Chi three days a week for 45 minutes. After fifteen weeks they not only felt much more healthy, but had twice the number of immune cells (called T-cells) which are specially equipped to knock out the virus that causes shingles and also many other viruses.

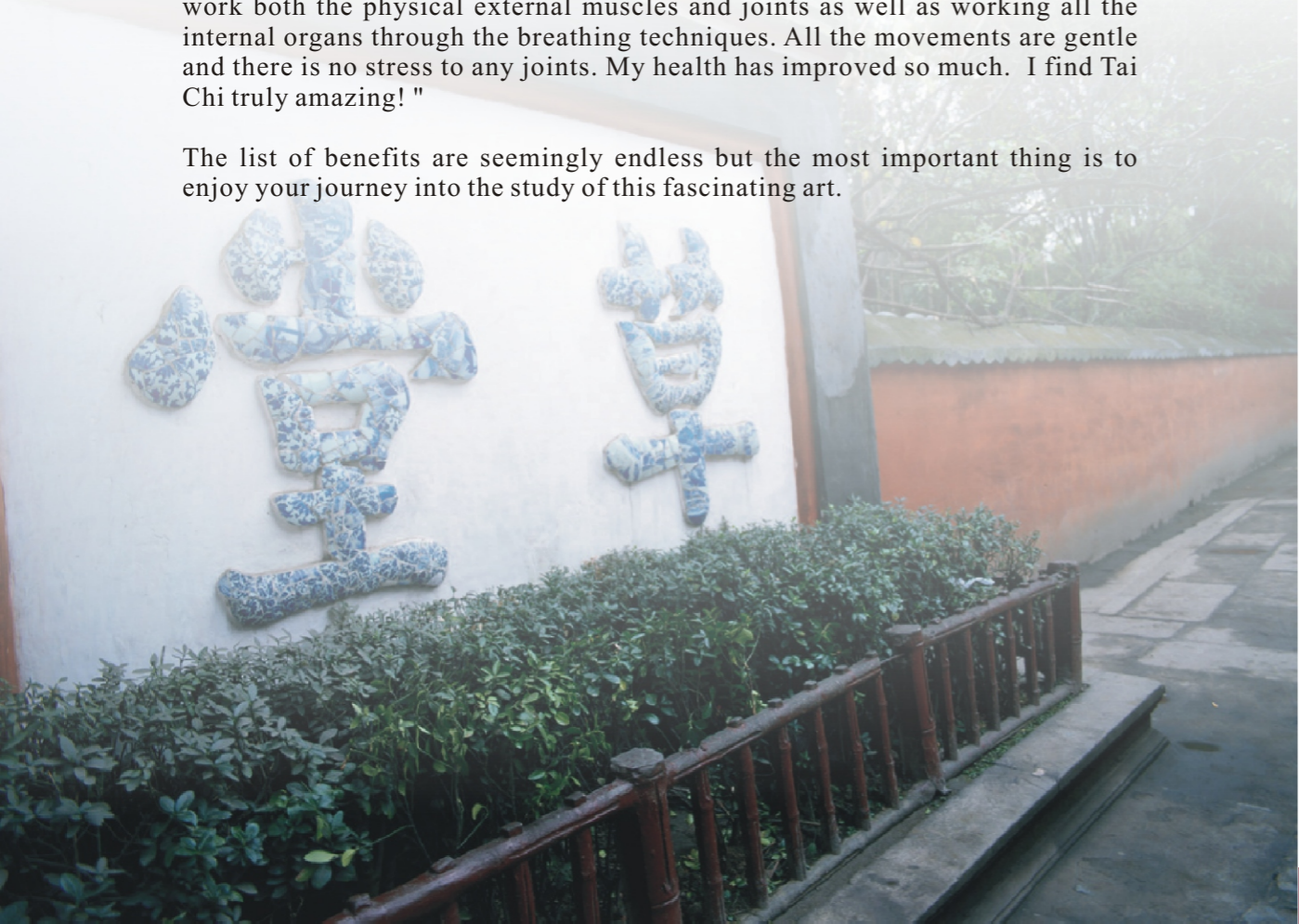


Jim Plant

Tai Chi Practitioner (Darwen Falls prevention classes)
" I began Tai Chi under the tuition of Steven Burton about 1 year ago. I was prompted by the Health and Fitness development team of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to try Tai Chi as they believed that it would help improve my mobility and balance.

I have always been active and in my youth was a very sporty person, but I have never come across a more concise series of exercises as Tai Chi. The exercises work both the physical external muscles and joints as well as working all the internal organs through the breathing techniques. All the movements are gentle and there is no stress to any joints. My health has improved so much. I find Tai Chi truly amazing! "

The list of benefits are seemingly endless but the most important thing is to enjoy your journey into the study of this fascinating art.



Section Five
Traditional Chinese Medicine & Tai Chi
Promoting mental, physical and spiritual health

By Professor Shulan Tang
Founder of Shulan College of Chinese Medicine.
Academic Executive of ATCM UK.
Fellow Member of Registrar of Chinese Herbal Medicine, UK.
Member of the British Acupuncture Council, UK.

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Introduction

I have been practicing Chinese medicine in England since 1991. The majority of my patients are westerners, suffering mainly from depression, anxiety and low energy, especially during the long cold winters here. Along with acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, I believe Tai Chi is excellent for treating physical excesses as well as mental and emotional problems. For pure relaxation it has no equal.

The close links between Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Tai Chi Chuan have long been familiar to the Chinese - both are based on the core value of balance and harmony, and the belief that balance is essential for a long and healthy life, physically, mentally and emotionally. This balance can best be summed up by the Yin-Yang concept.

The main foundation for TCM is that of universal energy, or Qi (pronounced as chee), which surrounds us and is necessary for all living things, whether plants, animals or humans. Qi is considered positive and negative, dynamic and static, passive and aggressive, Yin and Yang - complementary opposing forces. In the human body, this energy circulates along channels known as meridians. There are points along these channels which can affect the flow of Qi, thus directly altering the body's essential balance and harmony. If certain blockages or imbalances occur, this can result in illness. TCM assumes that a balance between Yin and Yang is the key to health.

There are many ways to influence the flow of yin and yang: TCM is one way, by prescribing herbs to treat certain excesses or deficiencies in the patients constitution; acupuncture is another, involving the manipulation of certain points on the meridians to stimulate Qi flow; and Tai Chi can also act to attract and circulate Qi





through the body in a steady way, rectifying any imbalances through gentle exercise. When your body is ready, more vigorous exercises will produce even greater benefits.

The medical classic of the Yellow Emperor, produced over two thousand years ago, states clearly that the concept of Yin-Yang is at the heart of everything, including life and death, and this belief is the basis for TCM treatment as well as Tai Chi forms of shadow boxing, pushing movements offset with pulling, left movements with right, forwards with backwards.

What makes Tai Chi special?

There are four main features of Tai Chi: it is gentle and relaxing, a non-impact activity suitable for all ages and nearly all conditions of health; it is fluid and uniform in movement - there are no sudden stops and starts as in many sports; it is circular and cyclical, the forms bringing you through a series of smooth movements to finish back where you started; and it is integrated and complete, gently working the whole body, exercising the mind and powers of concentration and breathing techniques, while working on the inner organs at the same time.

It is the most popular type of exercise that uniquely combines breathing, mind, body movements and consciousness all together. Without these qualities, it is just like any other exercise. The training methods will generate large amounts of natural Qi energy without external manipulation i.e. acupuncture or Traditional Chinese Herbs. Therefore it compliments acupuncture and Herbs then sustains and maintains health for the long term. After Tai Chi has helped improve health, it could lead to fighting fit health if you are dedicated enough.

Health benefits of practicing Tai Chi

One of the main reasons that Tai Chi is so widely practiced in China is that it promotes a long and healthy life. The Taoists practiced a form of Tai Chi in their quest for eternal youth, and the doctor Sun Simiao, known throughout the Chinese world as the Medicine King, lived to the ripe old age of 100,



conscientiously carrying out the forms. He recommended it as an excellent way of maintaining good health, urging his patients to learn perseverance and patience from the steady progress they made with Tai Chi.

Tai Chi is also a safe and practical sport. There is no risk of acute cardiac problems when practicing, and it is an excellent all-round healthy activity. Because of its balanced yet cyclical nature, there are no sudden movements or jolts to shock weak joints or muscles, the movement is gentle and constant, with no stops or starts. Breathing is kept slow and regular throughout the form, instead of forcing participants to gasp for breath or stop for a rest. It is extremely practical in that no special equipment or dedicated space is required - comfortable loose clothing is all you need, and a



little time regularly. You can keep up Tai Chi even when you are away from home.

This activity can also improve general coordination, flexibility and mobility. This is especially true for older people. Regular Tai Chi sessions will strengthen the leg and back muscles reducing the likelihood of falls and injuries, giving more independence. Arthritis can be eased with regular practice, as Tai Chi can help strengthen the muscles around the affected joints, encouraging flexibility and enlarging the range of movements in a gentle, painless way. Tai Chi is suitable for all ages, irrespective of gender, physical condition or strength and ability. Like Yoga, those practicing Tai Chi go at their own pace without forcing any movements, each level providing room for improvement.

Tai Chi is fun and can be practiced alone or in a group, to soft music or in silence, indoors or out. The importance of enjoyable activity cannot be overstressed - relaxation and enjoyment are as important in life as work and study. The trick is to get the balance right - too much work makes Jack a dull boy! Even we in the west know that a healthy body means a healthy mind, and that happiness plays a major role in our health. And when it is practiced in a group, all the advantages of socialization and personal interaction are at play and the activity becomes something to look forward to. So tai chi can simply be practiced for fun, too, and to meet people.

Finally, Tai Chi can provide positive treatment for many serious illnesses.

According to the WHO, the main killers of our society are now cancer, heart diseases, brain diseases and diabetes. Tai Chi and TCM can be beneficial in the treatment of all of these.



In TCM cancer is believed to be caused by a deficiency of some kind, and tonic herbs such as Ginseng and Lingzhi (ganoderma mushroom) are usually prescribed. In Tai Chi, cancer is thought of as grains of sand in the muscles, and the gentle, smooth movements can help to ease them slowly out of the system.

The cardiovascular system can benefit greatly from the practice of Tai Chi, as this activity promotes overall circulation of blood. The leg muscles are worked extensively, thereby reducing the risk of blood clots or other problems affecting the extremities, and the overall benefit is that blood and oxygen are directed more regularly to the brain. In TCM, brain and heart problems are often treated with Dan Shen, in tea, powder or tablet form.

Diseases of the blood can be slowed down with certain teas: Jiang Zhi tea for reducing cholesterol, Jiang Tang tea for lowering blood sugar levels, and Jiang Ya for blood pressure. Regular Tai Chi sessions have been proven highly effective for improving the heart rate, especially for normally sedentary elderly people, and for reducing blood pressure by decreasing stress. The immune system can also be improved with Tai Chi.

As with TCM, Tai Chi works the body and mind as a whole, seeking to rebalance Yin and Yang. Where TCM treats with herbs, massage and acupuncture. Tai Chi works with movement. Both offer genuine health benefits.



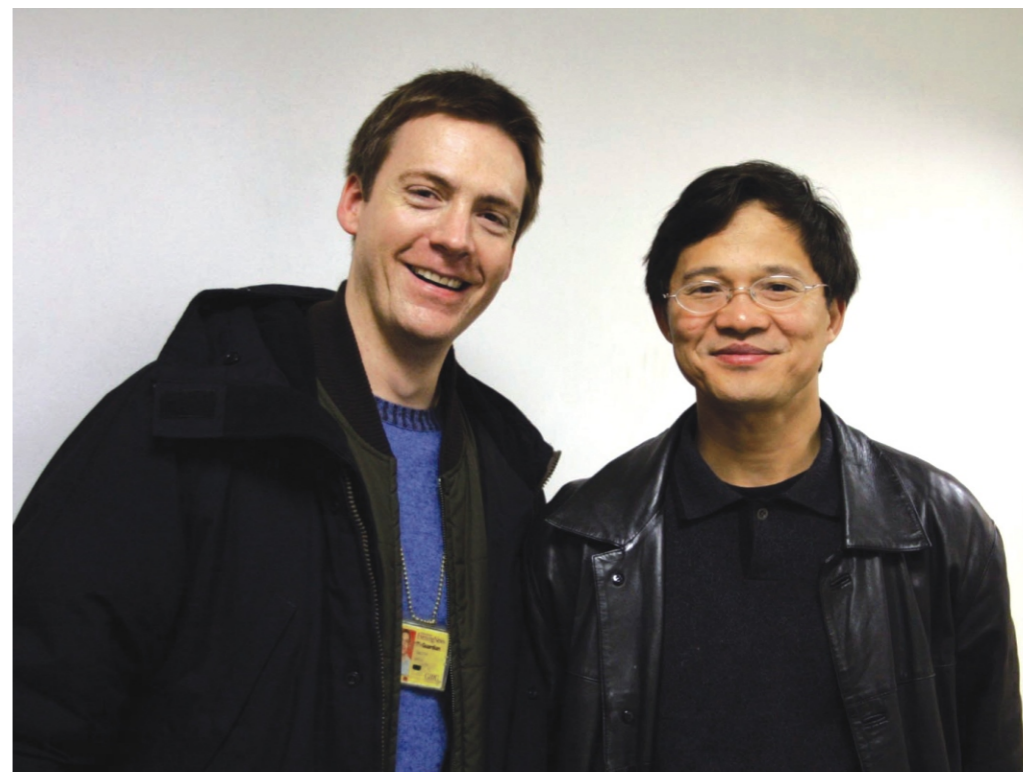
Prof. Shulan Tang with Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Tom OCallaghan in November 2004.

*TAI CHI IS A GREAT DISCIPLINE FOR BOTH MIND
AND BODY, AND A GOOD WAY TO KEEP FIT*

CLLR Tom OCallaghan

Chapter Six: Interviews With Practitioners by Tim Birch

The following section includes a series of interviews with a cross section of Master Liming's students here in the U.K. The personal accounts provide descriptions of the experiences and personal benefits relating to the health aspect of practicing Chen Style Tai Chi. The students range from twenty-something's to octogenarians; from people who are just starting out in their first year to those with more than a decade of experience.



Master Liming Yue and Tim Birch meet up at the final interview for the book

The initial interviews were conducted with Master Liming Yue's senior students, some of whom have studied under Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei and are now teaching Chen Style Tai Chi in various parts of the British Isles. Additional interviews were conducted with individuals who are active in intermediate classes led by Master Liming Yue and Grandmaster Kongjie Gou, with the final selection of shorter interviews conducted with students from many of the foundation classes which are held by Master Liming Yue throughout the North West region. The interviewees were generous, candid and offer an invaluable insight into the multitude of benefits which are to be gained from regularly practicing Chen Style Tai Chi. Thanks are respectfully given to them.



Dan Chisholm, 29; Full-time instructor of Chen Style Tai Chi based in West Sussex.

Q: When did you start Chen Style Tai Chi?

I began learning with Master Liming Yue in 1996 whilst studying at University in Manchester. I noticed an advertisement for new classes showing Master Liming Yue in an incredibly low posture and I knew from that moment I had to join. From the very first class there was no doubt that I had found someone special. Master Liming Yue has a control and gracefulness to his movements with an underlying presence of power that is jaw dropping. I have complete admiration for someone who has dedicated their life to achieve such a high level of skill and has inspired me to follow in his footsteps.



Q: So has it proved good fortune?

Definitely! I found out recently that my arrival in Manchester coincided with that of Master Liming's from China, so I guess I was just in the right place at the right time. You can call it fate, to meet such an accomplished teacher but it's important for the individual to recognize the opportunity and make full use of it.

I have been extremely fortunate to have only studied from some of the most talented masters in the world. Once you have witnessed and experienced this level of training anything else is just a disappointment. Life is short and Tai Chi is a long and challenging journey. To reach the highest levels it is essential that you find a good teacher who can guide and direct you along the correct path. If you are going to succeed in any activity it makes sense to learn from the most experienced practitioners available. This ensures you gain the maximum benefit and limits the amount of wasted time.

Q: What has kept you intrigued by Chen Style Tai Chi over time?

No matter what level you reach you will always find there is something more to learn. This is probably Tai Chi's greatest asset. Once you begin you will never become bored since all the benefits and abilities you develop become increasingly more profound as you progress. From relaxation to health, fitness to healing, martial application to spiritual training, all aspects are founded on the same basic principles that permeate every aspect of this art. It's just up to the individual how far you take it.

Tai Chi will continually challenge you physically and mentally. At first the movements seem easy to follow. But they require more than just simple replication. There is an underlying energy that needs to be stimulated, understood and then allowed to flow. But the whole process takes time. Once you learn to relax and listen to your body, your internal energy begins to flow. This creates a fluidity of movement that could not be produced through simply using body mechanics alone.

Q: How would you summarize Chen Style Tai Chi?

Chen Style Tai Chi is a dynamic system of movement that adheres precisely to the original Taoist principles of Yin and Yang. A student should be able to perform all movements with a clear understanding of these elements, since without it true balance is impossible. Movements should be smooth, graceful and effortless due to the involvement of internal energy. Once this internal energy has been stimulated and flows unobstructed; optimum health, self-awareness, healing abilities, martial skill and spiritual understanding all become accessible.

Q: Have you had any health troubles?

No. I have been fortunate with my health but this is mainly due to being heavily involved in sports from a young age. Personally, I see Tai Chi as an essential daily supplement, like a vitamin, that is important in sustaining a healthy body. Softer forms of moderated exercise like Tai Chi are far more beneficial to long term health than the modern "impact" forms of exercise that seem to provide only short-term benefits and do little to protect the long-term health of the individual. Softer exercises like Tai Chi is finally being recognized as providing the greatest benefits to physical and mental health that are sustainable well into old age.

Tai Chi has continued to keep me healthy and flexible, both physically and mentally. The benefits to my own health develop the more I study and I have begun to lay the foundations for good health for the rest of my life.

Q: What, for you, are the key health gains from studying Chen?

I personally feel that the most important gain from practicing Chen Style Tai Chi is the ability to relax. Relaxation is the most fundamental requirement and the root from which all other benefits will stem. After the body and mind are able to relax, subtle and gradual changes begin to occur within the body. The combinations of relaxation with the subtle twisting actions of the movements produce similar effects to massage. These massaging actions remove toxins, replenish the supply of nutrient rich blood, and promote optimum health and vitality.

Q: So a key point is that Chen Style Tai Chi helps you to get in touch with your body?

Yes. I think it surprises people just how much you start to understand your body and how your mind plays a role in effecting your state of health. These so-called "simple exercises" help to calm the mind, strengthen the body and allow you to develop a greater sensitivity and awareness of the self. Tai Chi is a deeply personal activity where everyone

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develops at a different rate as they begin to understand the feelings and sensations produced from practicing this fascinating art.

Q: Could you expand on the broader health benefits?

One of the most valuable features of practicing Tai Chi is its ability to calm the mind. The slow, meditative style of the movement provides the key for relieving tension and stress. Emotions, such as anger, anxiety and fear are the origin of many illnesses. Once emotions are brought under control by calming the mind, improvements to health begin to develop.

As the movements in Tai Chi are undertaken slowly, the body is gently conditioned to soften and tone all the muscles. This approach to training requires all the muscles to be exercised in a balanced and natural way that incorporates the whole body. This is essential to maintain good posture.

The movements performed during Tai Chi exercise lead to increased digestion, greater vitality, improved circulation, increased appetite, stabilized emotions and a calmer mind that will leave you feeling relaxed and refreshed - and all this from a simple exercise system!

Q: Any long-term reflections on Chen Style Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is not just a "simple exercise". It is a profound system that involves physical, mental and spiritual training. Little did I know when I attended my very first class that I would now be teaching and promoting this incredible art?

From my own training, I understand just how important Tai Chi can be in all aspects of life. It has allowed me greater control over my emotions and helped to develop a greater understanding of myself.

Unfortunately most people seem to take their health for granted, only becoming interested in healthcare after being confronted with illness. Keeping an active body and mind are essential to fight off ill health, senility and the multitude of problems that people associate with aging. With the right training, you can remain active and healthy well into your senior years, which is ironically, the part of your life when you have the time and the money to enjoy it.

Q: Any particular reflections on the mysterious internal aspect to Chen Style Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is a form of meditation that utilizes movement to develop spiritual awareness. Simple techniques are used to stimulate a feeling of internal energy. Once stimulated, the collection, circulation and refinement of this energy is required to strengthen the body and improve health. By practicing Tai Chi regularly energy begins to flow freely and movement becomes lighter and more fluid. By becoming sensitive to our bodies, energy is used to direct the flow of movement.

The closest analogy I can find to Tai Chi is mountain climbing. Most people aspire to reach the top. It ultimately comes down to talent, guidance and the individual's own determination to succeed. The journey can be long and challenging and some days we make great progress, whilst other days we will feel we are making no progress at all. There are thousands of steps and it is important that we should enjoy the views (benefits) along the way. Most importantly of all, we need to remind ourselves that the view from the summit is the best one. If we find times of difficulty or lose enthusiasm we must carry on. Each step, however insignificant, takes us one step closer to our final destination.

Ploutarchos Pluto Vlachopoulos, Chen Style instructor based in Athens, Greece.

Q: When did you start Chen Style Tai Chi?

I did kung fu for about a year and a half when I was 15 but it was not anything serious, it was mainly exercise. I was a track athlete. I did track for about four years 200m and long jump. So I always used to do exercise but Tai Chi was the first thing I have gone into seriously. I started Tai Chi in 2001. Master Liming Yue was my first teacher, it was weird because at some point I wanted to do something physical, a martial art. But of the martial arts I have known, I never really liked any of them. So I did a small search into Tai Chi. Also, I had met a lady who had advised me to do it if you find a good teacher. So, for me, meeting Master Liming Yue was fate.

Q: Is it key to find the right master?

Sure. And Master Liming Yue is the best in the UK and Europe.

Q: So you are highly committed to Chen Style Tai Chi?

Yes. I am doing Tai Chi as a discipline, as an art, from the health point-of-view and from the physical point-of-view. And one other reason now is the business point-of-view. I am putting much more emphasis on it. After the first year I went to China, I decided more or less not to do my MPhil but to go fully into Tai Chi. That I would do Tai Chi in Athens as a job. It is a small risk.

Q: What is your opinion of the health aspect to Chen Style Tai Chi?

The one specific I can tell you is that during the time I have been doing Tai Chi I have become calmer. People who do not know me and people who do know me have told me, quite a few times, that I emanate calmness. And I was not like that four or five years ago. I was more nervous, tense. Tai Chi has definitely helped to relax me. Also in my way of thinking. So I personally can speak for relaxation. If you practise Tai Chi you are definitely going to relax.



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Q: How would you summarize the broad benefits to Chen Style?

The thing is, when you start practicing Tai Chi, depending on the person, sooner rather than later you start to feel the Qi inside your body. It can improve your physical well-being without you noticing it: Things like agility, joints [suppleness], flexibility, balance and coordination of movements. Your body starts to become more aware of positioning such as the placing of the hands. And all of that simultaneously trains your mind because it is a mind exercise as well. Because once you start feeling something, you have to think about it. If you do not think about it then it has gone. You have to concentrate on what you are doing. So Tai Chi also helps concentration. There are many aspects to health. And generally, if you have a particular problem like a knee problem or waist problem or neck problem, you are not sleeping well, headaches, migraines, back problems, etc... all that, while practicing Tai Chi, problems are eased or made better.

Q: Has your experience of a more intensive training schedule led to acute developments?

Rapid. I mean, I started as everyone else doing Tai Chi once a week. But even with that, I saw some difference in the first few months. It depends on the person because someone might be more physical so he can take more exercise and so he will feel the effects of Tai Chi sooner rather than later. In the West, people often think about benefits and how soon can I have it. So when you start a gym it is about how fast you are going to lose weight, etc. Tai Chi is not like that. The short term benefit comes as soon as you start feeling the energy and so you start getting into the exercise. Then as time goes by, depending on your training and your effort, the longer term benefits can grow substantially and exponentially.

Q: What sets Chen Style Tai Chi apart in your estimation?

A lot of people do not realize that Tai Chi is actually Kung Fu. It is the original style of Kung Fu, I mean it is one of the earliest, basic forms of Kung Fu. Chen Style is the original style of Tai Chi. From Chen Style, all the other four branches of Tai Chi -Yang, Wu, Wu and Sun- have been developed. I have to admit I have not done any of the other styles, but I have seen Yang Style and spoken with people who did Yang Style and Chen Style. For me, the basic difference is that with Chen you can feel much more the martial art application. And you feel like you are doing martial arts together with, how can I put it, health exercise. Again depending on the person, you can put more emphasis either on the health or the martial arts aspect of Chen Style Tai Chi. Someone who puts more effort on the martial side gets the benefit of the health as well because it is the same exercise and vice versa. One of the main differences is that the energy releases are missing in the other styles. With Chen, and maybe it is because it is the original style, you can feel the energy, the Qi, sooner and stronger, perhaps. I think that is the case.

Q: Could you shed some light on the internal side to Chen Style?

Tai Chi internal side is like a separate category of the martial arts. You can learn Kung Fu, the moves, the kicks, the spins and all that in quite a short time if you really put effort into it. But the thing is, manipulating your energy, your Qi, is a whole different thing. You have to do it by practicing exercises. But it is also something you have to do by mind, so it is a lot different than the external martial arts only because of that internal aspect of Qi and how you can manipulate it and how can you make it either help your body or indeed others.

Martin Millar, 58, Office Manager based in Manchester.

Q: Could you outline your route into Chen Style Tai Chi?

I am in my second career at present. Previously I was a police officer in Manchester for 33 years. I have always kept fit. In my youth I played rugby and when I got too old for that I kept the physical side of my activities going. I worked out regularly for many years jogging and weight training. Although I was physically active I had a traumatic experience some years ago. I went to my doctor for a minor ailment and he gave me the news that I had suffered a heart attack. And that stopped me in my tracks. After various tests they decided that it was a very minor one. He was never happy about my weight training and he advised me against it. But he encouraged me to take up a physical activity, because, as part of my condition, I suffer from hypertension, or high blood pressure. So I had to get some physical activity. My son had recently started practicing Tai Chi. I knew nothing about it. Through him I found out it was good for hypertension. Although my son did Tai Chi, my impression of it was old dears waving their hands about on the banks of the Yangtze. Though I had a condition I was not ready for that until I saw my son practicing on my back lawn. Then I realized the Tai Chi that he was practicing had nothing to do with old ladies waving their arms about in the air. So I read up on Tai Chi and decided that I would go with him to one of Liming's classes. That was 2002 and I have been coming ever since.



Q: So what were your initial impressions of Tai Chi?

I felt a benefit from the breathing. I felt better for it, I felt healthier. And it also helped me relax and certainly reduced my blood pressure. Now I practice a couple of times a week at home and I come to the classes regularly. I am really convinced that there is something in Tai Chi I have certainly benefitted from it.

Q: What, for you, is the everyday benefit from Tai Chi?

The everyday benefit of Tai Chi is that I am able to relax. I can practice Qigong breathing at work when I feel I am getting stressed. I can do these breathing exercises which I feel helps me to relax.



Q: What health benefits do you sense when practicing Chen Style?

When doing Tai Chi I feel I am exercising my heart, my lungs, and my body although not as physically as some of the exercises I have done. But I am no spring chicken anymore and I have to be aware that I can not get my body into some of the positions which I could when I was a younger man. But on the whole I feel the exercising in Tai Chi benefits me physically and, certainly, being able to relax benefits me mentally.

Q: So do you see Tai Chi as a kind of total health system?

Iwould not say it was the total health system but there is something there and I benefit from it personally so I continue to do it. I just feel I am benefitting from it and yet there is more to come.

Q: Better to call it a complimentary health system?

All I can say is there is something in it which I do not understand.

Alastair Macgillivray, aged 55, a working G.P. from Hyde.

Q: When did you start practicing Chen Style Tai Chi?

Ihave been practicing Yang style for about three or four years and I have been learning this style [Master Liming's Chen Style], which is more difficult, for about 8 months. It's quite vigorous really - but I enjoy it. And it's fantastic value. Liming is a fantastic teacher.



Q: How do you fit Tai Chi into the busy schedule of a G.P.'s life?

The pressures of work are there but to make a change you've got to really want to do it. Tai Chi is part of my normal working day now and so I try to reorganise my schedule around this class.

Q: Given your professional life as a G.P., why do you practice Tai Chi?

Ithink medicine does not answer all the questions. And it is nice to be able to do something of your own effort towards getting better or to being better.

Q: Do you recommend Tai Chi in your work as a G.P.?

Yes. A lot of people come to see me, virtually every surgery, complaining of stress. So, in terms of Tai Chi, let's take 'breathing' as our example. We can focus on our breathing by just breathing deeper while making slight movements. If you breathe with a slight hand movement it gives you a timing; a pace. It helps people focus. I've always been encouraging people to breathe more deeply to relax, ever since I was in practice, for over twenty years. If you breathe more deeply you get more energized.

Q: You mentioned 'stress' and, these days, we're constantly being told from various sources that stress is sharply increasing with our 'ever faster lifestyles'. Could Tai Chi be a tonic for stress?

You used to be able to refer 'people with significant anxiety' for relaxation therapies, but the Mental Health Service, now, will hardly accept any referrals. So, there are some local Tai Chi classes, in Hyde and my patients have had good results since they started Tai Chi. They're actually helping others by running classes for other patients.

Q: In your considered opinion, how does Tai Chi benefit people?

It's really for the people to get out of it what they want. It's trying to oversimplify it to put it into particular benefits. In life you experience certain things and if the experience makes you feel better, and you can reproduce that feeling, then 'the thing' is good. With Tai Chi, you really get out of it what you put into it. I mean, you can read a book and it's nice but if you keep reading it, it's perhaps not quite as intense whereas with Tai Chi it gets better. There are not many things that you can say that about.

Q: How would you summarize Tai Chi?

Ithink, ultimately, Tai Chi is an experience. So I would encourage anyone reading this to go and experience Tai Chi. It's something that you get more out of if you go and experience it. You need to go four or five times. Once you've done that, you've got over the initial 'what is this all about?' and begin to feel attuned to it.

Geoff Leversedge, 45; College Manager and part-time Chen Style instructor based in Norwich.

Q: When did you start Chen Style Tai Chi?

Ihave been doing Tai Chi, and supposedly Chen Style, for about twelve years. But I have now been with Liming for the last four years. And I have got to say, that was when my proper Tai Chi learning started. Basically I had been wandering in the wilderness for a while looking for a good teacher, then Liming came along.

Q: Why has learning with Master Liming proved significant?

It is the same with everything there are going to be better and poorer quality in terms of the teaching that is going. Now I have always believed that the closer you are to the source of the family side of things then the better chance you have of actually getting the authentic teaching. Master Liming has been trained by Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei and others, so what we get from Liming is very close to the source. And that is important because things do get diluted as with all the martial arts.



Q: What has been your general experience of the health aspect to Chen Style?

Very positive. Before I started Chen Style I was very fit. I played squash and football. I thought Tai Chi was going to be a doddle. But it was actually one of the hardest things I ever started to learn. Because I realized, very early on, that I was not flexible. That I was not as fit as I thought I was.

Q: Do you have a specific insight into the health benefits?

I had a football injury before I took up Tai Chi. It was my lower spine right on the coccyx. I could still play football but as soon as I started to bend in the waist I seized up, I could barely get my hands to about knee height. With regular stretching and everything else with Tai Chi, palms are now flat on the floor. You see, half the time you do not realise that you are carrying injuries or aches and pains. I had been getting these football injuries which did not seem to be good things to take into my old age. I took up Tai Chi not knowing what it could do and found that even though I did not seem to be working as hard, I was getting a lot more benefit from the type of exercise.

Q: So what do you see as distinguishing Tai Chi exercise?

I see the difference between West and East. There is an awful lot of compression of muscles and joints in Western training like weight lifting and not so much of the stretching aspects which really do come out in things like Tai Chi and yoga. The stretching seems, from a physical point of view, to have an enormous benefit in terms of getting rid of the aches and pains and everyday things like bad posture or not being able to touch your toes which sound silly but the knock-on effects are quite profound.

Q: What kind of knock-on effects have you noticed from practicing Chen Style?

Energy wise, enormous increases. As time went on and the practice became better then a good session of Tai Chi would see me, say, clubbing into the early hours of the morning when my colleagues had given up a few hours before I mean, those are the silly anecdotal things which come to mind.

Given that you also teach Chen Style, how would you summarize it?

An awful lot of people believe that Tai Chi is all gentle: the soft gentle movements in the park stuff. So the shock to the system for a lot of people is that is only one aspect to the training. There is a huge amount to the training. Through Tai Chi, you will become much more analytical about your own body. I mean we do not pay much attention in the West to what we do with our bodies, we tend to be really bad at putting our bodies into uncomfortable positions and so on. With Tai Chi you will learn about how your body works and its functionality and will therefore be able to do things to help it.

Q: What are the everyday benefits of practicing Chen Style?

Through working with the body in Tai Chi, you get to know your own body very, very well. Because you are inwardly analyzing what you are doing you tend to be able to pinpoint, after a while, exactly where a particular problem might be focused. And as a result of using your Tai Chi training and exercise, daily, you can work on that particular area to actually improve it.

Q: What of the longer term benefits with Chen Style?

A lot of people come to my classes because they have heard that it is good for health but do not really have a clue what is involved. It is the same with anything that you do: you need to put in the practice in order to get the benefits. And nobody should be under the illusion that it is going to be a quick fix. It is not like these adverts that say something like tummy trimmed in two months or whatever. Benefits you will get, but only if you put the effort in. And the benefits with Tai Chi seem to last longer because it is stretching. If you stretch a tendon it tends to stay stretched longer than a muscle which, once it has been worked and then relaxed, tends to turn to fat quicker."

Q: Do the health benefits of Tai Chi apply to all ages?

They do apply to people of all ages. I firmly believe that... I have one class of old ladies in sheltered housing. The oldest one there is 92. I have only been with them about six months but, now, all of the ladies come into the room with a spring in their step. They are very chatty, lively, very keen on it. Their practice is obviously limited given their ages and bodies, but they are getting something out of it even at their age. Whilst the Tai Chi is tempered for what their bodies can actually take, they are experiencing benefits out of it. In terms of their dedication, their interest, and how I can see the benefits are hitting them, I have to say that they are a remarkable group. It is proved to me that it does not matter what age you come to this. Even if their mobility is not hugely improved, their minds are more active. It really has given them a new lease of life, if you like.

Q: In your overall estimation, what is special about Chen Style?

I have got to say that Chen Style Tai Chi is one of the most mentally demanding things I have ever undertaken. It is intellectually challenging because of your battle with your body. You make your body do things that it is not used to doing. And there is quite a big mental challenge to this. So from a holistic point of view, it is that never-ending mental challenge along with the physical challenge which gives the complete picture, and makes it special.

Anthony Rushton, aged 35. Martial arts instructor based in Malvern, Worcester.

Q: When did you start training in the martial arts?

I first started training in the martial arts and fitness at around the age of 9. Learning what I could from friends, books, films and anything else I could find to help me. But my first Martial arts class was in the art of Wing Chun

