

Tai Chi Chuan reprograms your body

The ancient martial art of Tai Chi Chuan (literally translated as 'supreme ultimate fist') has brought a wide range of beneficial health impacts to millions of people over centuries. What is it about this practice that has inspired generations to spend time learning it? If you ask long-time tai chi instructor Sandra Zabudofsky, she says the health and mobility benefits people feel from practicing tai chi movements are the result of a 're-programming' of the body that occurs naturally as participants begin to learn how to 'move from the inside.'

While venerable Chinese warriors learned internal martial arts to maximize their fighting abilities, today those same techniques can show us how to soften our joints, improve our posture and move and breathe more freely. Having studied tai chi for almost 25 years, Sandra has come to understand how Tai Chi's many health benefits can be achieved. 'There is a great deal of depth in all of Tai Chi's seemingly simple movements,' says Sandra. 'Each movement teaches lessons about how your body works. The slow speed of Tai Chi gives us time to be aware of our movements and to 're-map' how all our muscles and joints function.' In paying close attention to how one's body moves and functions, practitioners 'have to locate and condition the muscles, tendons, and connective tissue to allow for a release of tension leading to a greater range of movement,' according to Sandra.

Tai Chi may be gentle exercise, but it can strengthen the body's core, allowing for more flexibility, strength and balance. 'I've seen students with arthritis slowly gain more strength, and students with flexibility issues improve the control they have over their bodies,' claims Sandra. Medical studies have shown that Tai Chi can improve the cardiovascular and immune systems.

Many athletes in sports such as swimming, tennis, football, rugby and golf turn to Tai Chi as a way to tone their bodies, practice co-ordination, and achieve strength in their cores. However, Tai Chi is great solution for all ages and demographics, as people all over the world turn to it for meditation, fitness and relaxation.

Tai Chi is known today for its health benefits, but Sandra does not want students to forget that it is not only a health art but an ancient martial art. The beautiful movements all contain fighting applications, 'and the full lesson is not learned unless the student understands how the movement can work in practice as a martial technique. In our classes, we always look at the martial applications to fully appreciate the strength and flow of Tai Chi.'

For those interested in furthering their knowledge of Tai Chi, Sandra Zabudofsky is teaching for her 16th year in Bancroft and is always looking for new and interested students to join her classes. You can learn more at her web site: www.tiachibancroft.webs.com and contact Sandra at 613-921-8584 or taichiwarrrior108@gmail.com for more information.

Submitted by Neil Pomeroy