

# Why Don't More Men Do Tai Chi?

by Wes Adams

With the health benefits of a regular Tai Chi practice so much in the news lately, benefits such as stress management, lower blood pressure and a better overall sense of well-being, it's amazing that more men aren't doing it. After 10 years of teaching Tai Chi professionally, I have come to realize that many men just don't understand Tai Chi.

## Tai Chi in Layman's Terms

Tai Chi brings together two great ancient traditions of China—Chi Kung (also spelled Qigong) and Kung Fu.

Chi Kung is a combination of breathing exercises, meditation and movement meant to increase mind and body health through better circulation of the body's energy (Chi or Qi). Central to the practice acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine is the theory of an energy system, through which Chi flows, uniting individual organ systems as well as the mind, body and spirit. Kung Fu is a general term for traditional Chinese martial arts, which includes a number of fighting styles. Developed over centuries of practice, these styles might include those that mimic the movements of animals (eg, Hung Ga, White Crane), or the internal arts that harness the power of Chi itself (eg, Bak Mei Pai, Yiguan).

An old saying in Tai Chi proclaims, "Everyone wants to be healthy, but only a few want to learn to fight!" Tai Chi, when taught in its complete form, is an excellent self-defense system, though most modern instructors do not know the martial arts side of the art at all.

Among those who do, most generally teach fighting only to the few students seriously interested in that aspect.

## The Benefits of Learning and Practicing

So why are people who just want to be healthy practicing the martial art of Tai Chi when there are hundreds of types of Chi Kung that have nothing to do with fighting? It is because the martial arts movements of Tai Chi, done slowly and purposefully along with breathing, engage mind and



body more fully than Chi Kung alone.

The movements of Tai Chi are beautiful as well, whether to watch or to do, and can be a

very effective adjunct to healing. Over the years, I have seen people lower or eliminate their need for blood pressure medicine and/or insulin. People with fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome find a reduction of pain and increase in energy, and some who come in using a cane have laid it aside after a few months of classes. I have seen people with emotional issues gain greater mental and emotional balance, and everyone find better health, vitality and enjoyment of life. Most importantly, people who study Tai Chi begin a lifelong love affair with a beautiful art that enriches their life on many levels.

## Why Aren't You Doing Tai Chi?

Everyone says that health and happiness are a high priority, but this is not necessarily reflected in their life choices. Too much time is often dedicated to TV, computers or working overtime, which does not support health, so why not shift some time into Tai Chi? I can honestly say that no one has ever said, "I wish I'd never done that Tai Chi stuff, it ruined my life!"

What I have heard them say is that the practice has helped keep them happy over a long and healthy life.

*Wes Adams is the owner and leader of Columbia Tai Chi Center at 2910 Rosewood Drive. For more information, see ColumbiaTaiChiCenter.com or call (803) 873-2100. See ad page 13.*

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