

UTTER RELAXATION AT A CELLULAR LEVEL

by John Heinerman
Prime Times Editor

Tai Chi Chuan is an ancient form of exercise practiced in China for many centuries. When I was in Shanghai for the first time way back in 1980, I noticed outside my hotel window a group of elderly folks going through a series of simple exercises at 5:30 in the morning. What struck me the most was that all of the movements were elegant and graceful. It reminded me of watching ballet, but in s-l-o-w motion!

Grandmaster Fu, one of the renowned practitioners of a modern form (called Fu Style), said this about Tai Chi Chuan: "...It is absolutely forbidden to leap about in one breath so one is streaming with sweat, and panting like a water buffalo. One should use calmness to control one's action. It is done by using one's breath to control one's movements, and making one's movements correspond with one's breathing."

Breathing properly is a very important element of this exercise system. As Grandmaster Fu noted: "Although you are in action, you are calm. The slower your movements can be made, the better. When your movements are slow, you can then breathe deep and long... Naturally, you will not suffer from palpitation and panting."

A local Utahn, Tommy Kirkoff, has been practicing the Fu Style now for 8 years. He finds that it differs drastically from Western-based exercises, which, as he correctly notes, "are all about gaining strength for the body." Tai chi chuan is just the opposite of this in that it doesn't put one's body to the ultimate limits. Rather, it's about achieving the greatest relaxation humanly possible.

On an I like to think of it "Utter relax

ation at a cellular level!" Kirkoff has made available a five DVD set entitled "Five Element Healing Exercise: for a nominal sum. The first DVD focuses on Sitting Tai Chi which an elderly person can do from any kind of chair. It contains segments devoted to Healing Face Massage, Healing Seated Exercises, and Simple Standing Exercises.

The second DVD is on Energy Practice (known as Chi Gong). It features a Gentle Intro, a more vigorous pace, and some Kung Fu techniques.

The third DVD has Grandmaster Fu's Golden Form Tai Chi, which breaks down in the following order: Introduction; Exercises; Golden Form; Individual Forms; and More Information.

The last DVDs become increasingly complex. The Wudang Calisthenics takes one through The 8 Pieces of Silk routine, Wudang Calisthenics, XingYi, and BaGua Exercises.

The last one is devoted almost exclusively to XingYi Boxing. This is broken down into several different phases: XingYi Stepping and Splitting, Crushing, Drilling, Pounding, and Crossing all of which are different movement positions.

Included with this set is a booklet, "How Does One Practice Tai Chi Chuan Properly?" by the Grandmaster himself, and a CD of "Very Relaxing Music: composed by Steve Nelson.

Kirkoff rightfully asserts that this exercise system can be like "the ultimate panacea," in that it covers "a broad range of physical responses." The top four include an Immuno Response, a Cardio-pulmonary Response, as well as addressing limited mobility due to arthritis and elevated blood pressure (hypertension).

A growing body of scientific studies has already shown that Tai Chi Chuan

can significantly improve these four areas of human health, plus an additional six others.

Kirkoff poses this question, "If tens of millions of Chinese do it over there, then why aren't more of us doing it here?" I offered some thoughts which he seemed to go along with.

For one thing, it doesn't fit the Christian-Judaic culture of America very well. For instance, immortality in these two great belief systems, embody the concept of eternal life, as in "living forever." But in Chinese philosophy, immortality

holds an entirely different meaning. Live well here and beyond your years!

The other thing is that our seems to be in such a big hurry. Whereas Tai Chi Chuan eases taking everything much more and, when you do, doing so with expenditure of strength or even ing of strength, for that matter!

It is an exercise form definite for seniors! Tommy Kirkoff reached at 888-278-6028 or 2546.



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