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and Qigong the most popular exercises in the world. (Yoga could also be considered Qigong, and although it's numbers are fewer, many would argue that Qigong is a style of "Taoist Yoga")

In the West, we generally consider exercise to be impulsive movements which strengthen the body, reduce body fat (providing "fitness") and require a great deal of energy; in fact, when Westerners finish an exercise routine, they are most often panting, exhausted and in dire need of a shower.

In Asia, this type of exercise is viewed as stressful and damaging. It's true that if you are training to be a performance athlete, you need to train hard: jogging, lifting weights and working out like a horse plowing a field. But there is a line to be drawn between exercising for "health" or merely "fitness." Body builders do not diet and lift weights for health. Marathon runners are often over training, leaving their immune systems beat down to nothing, which can easily allow the entrance of sickness.

Because Tai Chi is slow and relaxing, over training is not an issue. The immune system reaches its peak performance through this kind of exercise.

But why do Westerners exercise? *To look good, to look fit.* If you look at most Tai Chi masters (and even yoga and pilates instructors), there is no question as to whether or not they are fit. Many have incredible bodies. Most are not out jogging or lifting weights to look this way. They are exercising with relaxed energy—this is the most efficient use of the body. In China, this energy is called chi; in Japan, ki; in



Grandmaster Fu Sheng Long practicing Advanced Tai Chi, photo by Tommy Kirchoff

India, it's called prana.

Tai Chi, Qigong and Yoga are incredible art forms practiced by more people on this earth than any other exercise. The reason is because they are the optimum way to keep FIT AND HEALTHY.

If you've seen Tai Chi before, you know the rehearsed movements are slow and beautiful. Practice of these "forms" cultivates the student's internal energy, or chi. On a performance level, this chi can be applied to just about everything else you do. Your balance will get better (whether on stable ground, a slippery surface, or even a moving platform like skis or a snowboard), you'll walk better, swing a golf club better, and have a greater understanding of efficiency and the

utilization of your own personal energy.

How can Tai Chi do all this, you ask? First, the slow movements really tone and relax the muscles. Toned, relaxed muscles are more efficient and coordinated. The nerve signals that move the muscles become more intense, causing the muscles to move faster and more powerfully when called upon. And because you are relaxed, only the muscles needed for a movement are called to action; the so-called "antagonistic" muscles (the ones that work against the "protagonistic" muscles you need to perform any body movement) are held loose and relaxed so that the body movement is optimally efficient. This is why Tai Chi has become the

most widely-practiced martial art; it allows the practitioner to move very fast against an aggressive opponent.

Both Utah State Governor Olene Walker and Park City Mayor Dana Williams have declared the week of April 19th to the 25th as "Tai Chi & Qigong Week in Utah" and "Tai Chi & Qigong Week in Park City" respectively. They have done so in conjunction with the international celebration of "International Tai Chi Day" and the United Nations' World Health Day. Throughout the week, there are various events and free lessons offered from the different Tai Chi schools in Utah.

Park City's main event is on April 24th from 2 to 4 p.m. in the McPollin Elementary gymnasium. All are welcome to this "Tai Chi Open House" to come see the legendary Master Fu Sheng Long demonstrate Tai Chi with the Fu School based here in Park City; visitors can also learn more about Tai Chi and even learn some of the basic movements. There is no admission fee, and those interested are encouraged to sign up for the Park City Community Education Tai Chi class which will be held on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the McPolin Elementary gymnasium (the space is gigantic, so there is no class size restriction). The class is six weeks long beginning on April 28th; the cost is \$75.00.

For more information, please call Tommy Kirchoff at 435.901.2546 or visit WWW.FUSTYLE.ORG.

Remit registration form to:
 Park City School District Community Education
 2700 Kearns Boulevard, Park City UT 84060
(Duplicate form as needed for multiple registrations.)

Sign up now!

Class desired: Tai Chi

Class day/date/time: Wednesday / 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Name of participant: _____ Age/Grade (if child): _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Address: _____

City / zip code: _____

Home telephone: _____ Other telephone: _____

Email: _____
(This is important to have and is NOT used for any other purpose than to correspond with you about your class. You will receive an email giving you directions to the class and other helpful information.)