

Tai Chi for Arthritis

by: Charles Westcott

There are several classes of Tai chi offered at All that Matters one of which is the Tai Chi from the Arthritis Foundation. This class is what I would like to talk about. Tai chi is a gentle exercise and has many differing forms. The arthritis Foundations class provides a joint safe medically derived form of Tia chi exercise. The stances are higher and the movements are considered safe from the standpoint of the Arthritis Foundation.

The slow movements may be familiar from a television commercial or having seen them in a park of practitioners. The movements of tai chi are gentle and flowing. The benefits are many: increased flexibility, balance and muscular strength and fitness have been proven scientifically. Other interesting benefits come from the slow attentive practice including increased awareness of ones body and posture. This increased awareness is known as mind body integration or mindfulness.

Tai Chi from the Arthritis Foundation is started sitting in a chair and may you may sit whenever you need to. Standing up mindfully is the first step on the road to learning Tai chi. The next is some gentle movements through a full range of motion done standing up to exercise each body part and open and stretch the joints gently. The warm ups complete a set of Tai Chi is begun and moves are worked on in a step wise progressive manner. Then a cool down followed by a " how did Tai Chi make you feel today?" minute to asses your progress. So why would you want to do this?

Movement is recommended by the Arthritis Foundation walking, swimming, and bicycling all are good. The ancient practice of tai chi was recommended by Chinese physicians for at least a couple of centuries. Knowing that a practice is helpful people often would love to try it but are too busy. Setting aside time and resources to get relief and the benefits of better balance more flexibility strength and good posture with no adverse side effects seem to good to be true yet when people try it they do see some interesting things.

Among my students some very interesting stories get shared as the benefits happen in time. It seems each one has a story of interest. I would like to share a couple. Easter of last year after a family dinner one of my students returned with quite a happy story. She had been complimented on her weight loss. I asked her how much she had lost. She said" Not a pound I was sitting up straight for the first time in years." Another student recently came in with a story of having some dispute with her Physician. The recent visit had some surprising results. The woman's nurse had measured her and she had grown and inch. She insisted that the doctor measure her again and again finally she accepted that she had indeed straightened out some postural curves and was standing a whole inch taller.

Tai chi can promote these and other positive lifestyle changes in someone willing to practice. The tipping point is different for every one but change does come. Tai chi can help you with any sport or activity by creating good movement practiced slowly. Tai chi from the arthritis foundation is a great way to begin studying Tai Chi which has kept my interest for 12 years and brought me health and friendships that I hope to nurture for a life time.

Charles Westcott is a certified Tai Chi for Arthritis Instructor and has been practicing Yang long form Tai Chi for over 10 years. He offers 3 classes per week at All That Matters for both beginner and intermediate students. For a schedule of classes visit www.allthatmatters.com. Visit his website at [www.http://www.mindfulcooperative.com](http://www.mindfulcooperative.com).