

Tai Chi's Influence on Life

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All my life I've been fascinated with learning. The promise of uncovering useful information keeps me alert to discover the truth in a world that often disguises and distorts the precious knowledge we seek. Perhaps this is why people are drawn to tai chi and the ancient wisdom revealed when you make the regular practice of tai chi an essential ingredient in your life. Tai chi will teach you things that are both precious and useful if you are open to the subtle, more internal avenues of learning.



The cornerstone of Dr Lam's teaching strategy is encouraging students to stay within their comfort zone. This is essential because staying in your comfort zone prevents set backs and promotes health and healing. Pushing and overdoing are highly overrated by our society, yet so many people learn this the hard way. Perhaps it is so effective because it really gets our attention. I will admit to learning some of life's best lessons this way. Life is an amazing teacher.

Returning home from teaching a great workshop, I experienced a slight twinge in my SI joint that quickly deteriorated into pain when sitting down. In order to stay within my comfort zone I had to cancel my tai chi students, classes and workshops for a few months and simply rest and heal. It was a shock to realize through contemplation that my lifestyle, which included a lot of travel for pleasure and to teach intensive tai chi workshops, was perhaps becoming more than my chronological age could accommodate easily. Slowing down was appropriate. It was eye opening to go from an active tai chi schedule abruptly to nothing but eating and e-mail, mostly in a reclined position, but resting was a tremendous gift, complete with insights into lifelong patterns I am now actively choosing to change.

Another thing I didn't know before tai chi enveloped my life is that simplicity has real value. In tai chi you learn how to eliminate distractions by focusing on the present moment. When moving, you focus on feeling each weight transfer, allowing arms to follow waist movement and noticing subtle changes in your body. Eliminating the flourishes, embellishments and exaggerations in life, leaves you with simplicity at the core. Tai chi teaches you to focus on simplicity, harmonize with unfolding events and to create a balance in your life. A poster on the wall in a health clinic I visited said it all. It spoke about how to find simplicity in your life. "Slow down. Imagine doing less. Learn to say no. Follow your heart. Yield to life..." Sounds like a good description of the wisdom in this ancient art when you follow tai chi principles by applying them to life situations.

When you focus on learning all you can from life, you ultimately become a good student. This emphasis on perpetual learning is a desirable quality in a good teacher. Be aware of opportunities to learn; tai chi is rich in opportunity beyond the form and you might learn how good it feels to stay within your comfort zone, as I am. You might also discover that simplicity leads to an appreciation of the spiritual dimension in life. Tai chi will teach you that awareness is as valuable as thinking. Push hands training gives you direct experience in the value of awareness and sensing energy and will also teach you that knowing when to yield is a real strength. These are valuable life lessons that I wish for you in your exploration of tai chi.