

Non Martial Tai Chi for Well-Being

Hello & all good wishes to you.

I'm Colin Snow, Founder & Principal Instructor for Natural Step School of Tai Chi based here in Minneapolis.

My first meeting with Tai Chi took place in Britain back in the early 80's. The instructor was Richard Farmer, Founder of the UK's premier Tai Chi School, Rising Dragon Tai Chi. I became his assistant & after an apprenticeship of 8 years a qualified instructor. Richard is now the Honorary President of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain and Mentor to the teachers and students of Natural Step Tai Chi.

While listening to & watching his demonstration 30 years ago, an awareness beyond that of my familiar sense of self was touched by the grace, flow and dignity of his movements.



Often described as 'Meditation in Movement', the playing & exploration of Tai Chi as both a Health & Spiritual practice became a regular daily occurrence for me. I had just embarked on a very demanding career as a Primary School Teacher & playing Tai Chi became a necessity as the means to find some solace and grounding at the start, middle & end of many stress full days.

Even after 30 years this process of practice, the Path of Tai Chi, continues to resonate with me today, to gently unfold & reveal itself as a welcoming companion that provides constant nourishment for Mind, Body & Spirit, quite amazing!

In this lineage one begins Tai Chi by re-connecting awareness with the physical body. We enable this through an exercise that allows us to find a naturally aligned, postural step forwards. From this place we begin to know & appreciate what it is like to take a naturally aligned step

in life, living each & every day not from a place of just surviving it but from being truly alive to it & with it.

And so, Natural Step School of Tai Chi (NSSTC), was established as a way to offer guidance for empowering others to realign & re-connect with the natural ebb & flow of life through the direct experience of ones own true nature.

A very, very, very short history of Tai Chi

There are many stories and legends associated with the origins of Tai Chi. Its philosophical root derives from Taoism which is at least 4,000 years old. One story ascribes the movements of Tai Chi to Bodhidharma, a monk famed for bringing Buddhism from India to China and founding the original Shaolin temple (527AD). These movements were integrated with the cultivation of non-violence & peaceful mind by the monks. This developed into a practice of self defence which didn't contradict their vows or disturb their meditative state of mind.

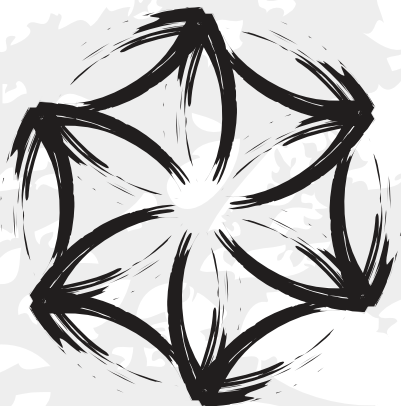
Whatever the truth is, Tai Chi has stood the test of time over hundreds if not thousands of years. This is a remarkable testament to its continuing effectiveness as a Healing Art form that originates from probably many ancient Wisdom Traditions because anything that doesn't work usually becomes obsolete.



Tai Chi today tends to fall into 2 categories with elements of each found in the other & there is plenty of variety. So like bread, it's all bread but there are many types to choose from. Some teachers like to focus on the Martial Art aspects, while others incline towards delivering the Health & Meditative benefits. Sometimes teaching which falls

into the second category will understand & offer guidance in the 'Spiritual Path' of Tai Chi & the Four Principles.

*What is the purpose of a true spiritual path?
To reunite with the stillness,
which by direct experience of any gifted moment,
is undisturbed by the movement of thought.*



Healing & Empowering Self.

One of the distinct advantages of Tai Chi over other western exercise systems is that the movements, if correctly taught, will be low impact, graceful, easy to learn & enjoyable. As a consequence Tai Chi becomes very accessible to all, regardless of age, ability, or current level of Health. It requires no special clothing or external equipment and once learnt it empowers & informs practitioners wherever & whenever they choose, for the rest of their lives.

We live in a culture that would appear to provide a, 'Fix It', antidote for anything that has a negative impact on our Physical or Social Well-Being.

Unfortunately this 'Fix It' culture creates a very linear & fragile way of living life because it excludes any preventative measures to ensure that we don't reach that point of needing something to be fixed.

Tai Chi is preventative medicine at its best, while offering an amazing array of health benefits that are both physiological & psychological in nature. Contemporary scientific and medical research is growing and conclusive in that many common acute and chronic ailments have been relieved & in many cases overcome through the regular practice & integration of Tai Chi.

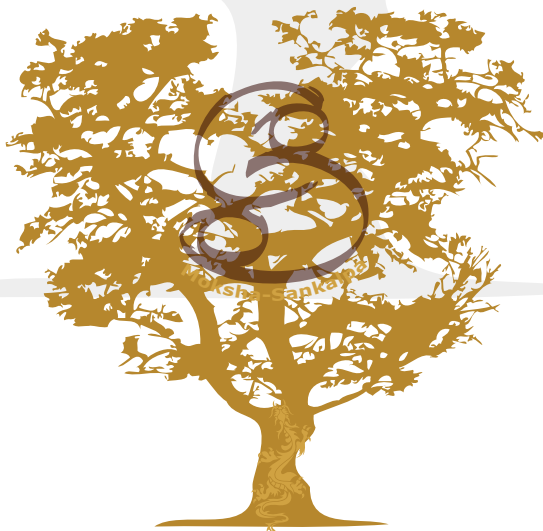
Parallel to the healing process that begins in the body, the experience of practice invites the meditative qualities of Stillness, Space & Presence to guide us towards the creation of inner peace & understanding.

This empowers the practitioner to release themselves from negative conditioning, fear & reactivity, replaced by the creation of space for just being with the natural movements of life. Once inner alignment with our truth & absolute acceptance of 'what is' becomes established, greater love for ourselves & others will become wholly integrated into our everyday lives. We then live life more from the Heart than the mind, which is the third Principle from this lineage & particular Path of Tai Chi.

With love & many good wishes,
Colin.

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