

Tai Chi: ancient art, modern application

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People are exposed to more information than ever before; non-stop digital feeds from world news websites, social media platforms, manufacturers and on demand entertainment. The expectations placed on individuals as a result of all this can leave people feeling overwhelmed or burned out. Add to this pressure from exams, deadlines, balancing paid work with studying and finances, it is no surprise that students are at particular risk of stress related illnesses.

Imagine if there was an activity, which was easy to learn, required no special equipment and could be practiced anywhere at any time, by people of any age or fitness level that enhanced mental, physical and emotional health.

Such an activity exists, and it has been practiced since the eighth century BC. It is called Chi Kung (Qigong); the most well-known type of Chi Kung is called Tai Chi and like yoga its aim is to balance the mind, body and spirit. Tai Chi is a healing / martial art that combines movement, breathing and mindfulness to circulate energy (Chi/Qi) around the body. The movements (forms) incorporate the ancient Chinese theory of Yin and Yang (interdependent opposites) and the Five Element theory (Acupuncture is also based on these theories). There are several Tai Chi styles; the most prominent are Yang, Chen, Sun and Wu.

Chi is the life energy that sustains us. The development of the Chi was originally used to increase strength for combat, but the techniques have been found to improve health. This is the main reason why people practice Tai Chi today.

What benefits can I gain from Tai Chi?

- ◆ Better mood, with lower levels of depression, stress and anxiety
- ◆ More energy and stamina
- ◆ Enhanced flexibility, balance and agility
- ◆ Improved sleep quality



If you are interested in trying Tai Chi / Qi Gong classes, we offer a weekly class at the university. Foundation sessions last one hour and are suitable for all ages and abilities. Tai Chi can be performed in regular, comfortable clothing. Please contact mark.pountney@liverpool.ac.uk for more details.