

## **Martial Arts for Health 1**

From: [www.your-martial-arts-resources.com](http://www.your-martial-arts-resources.com)

### **Wrestling 'boosts immune system':**

From: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3564321.stm>

(February 25, 2004):

Regular wrestling could boost children's immune systems, a study suggests.

University of California researchers found the number of bacteria and virus fighting white blood cells was significantly raised by exercise.

They said in the British Journal of Sports Medicine that natural killer cells rose in particular.

However, sports science experts said white blood cell counts alone were not evidence of improved immunity.

A separate study, published in the same journal, highlighted the benefits of exercise in all age groups, finding that martial arts promote fitness in middle age.

The research into children put 11 healthy boys aged between 14 and 18 through a 1.5-hour wrestling practice session and sampled their blood before and after the session.

They found that levels of all groups of white blood cells, particularly the natural killer cells, rose significantly.

The killer cells fight cancer and viruses by searching out the equivalent of a flag carried by normal cells. Those without such a flag are attacked by a cocktail of chemicals.

The researchers said this was the first time it had been shown in healthy adolescents that exercise had a significant effect on the immune system. But it was not yet possible to say what the overall effect was on immunity.

However, Professor Mike Gleeson, professor of sports medicine at Loughborough University, said: "There is a problem in interpreting increases in numbers of white blood cells as a result of exercise as improving the immune system and protecting against infection."

What the white blood cells were doing was more important than how many of them there were, he said. Counting the increase in specific types of white blood cell was also not proof the exercise was beneficial, Professor Gleeson added.

He said regular, moderate amounts of exercise of no more than two hours a day probably did have a slight benefit on the immune system.

The martial arts study compared fitness levels of nine people aged between 40 and 60 who practised soo bahk do, which is similar to karate, with nine sedentary people.

Those who did the martial art were found to have better levels of body fat, balance, flexibility, muscle strength, endurance and aerobic capacity. There was no benefit for grip strength.

### **Tai Chi 'improves body and mind':**

From: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/3543907.stm>  
(March 9, 2004):

The ancient Chinese martial art of Tai Chi can help to improve people's health, research suggests.

Doctors in the United States analysed 47 studies looking at the impact Tai Chi had on people with chronic health problems, like heart disease or MS.

They found that it could improve balance control, flexibility and even the health of their heart.

Writing in The Archives of Internal Medicine, they said it also reduced stress, falls, pain and anxiety.

Tai Chi originated in China where it has been used for hundreds of years.

It combines deep breathing with relaxation and postures that flow from one to another through slow movements.

Practitioners say it can have a positive effect on people's health, improving memory, concentration, digestion, balance and flexibility.

They say it is also helpful for people with psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety or stress.

This latest study by doctors at Tufts-New England Medical Center in Boston suggests there is medical evidence to back up those claims.

Their findings are based on a review of studies published in English and Chinese.

"Overall, these studies reported that long-term Tai Chi practice had favourable effects on the promotion of balance control, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness and reduced the risk of falls in elders," the researchers said.

They said the martial art helped to reduce "pain, stress and anxiety in healthy subjects".

But it also had benefits for people with serious conditions, such as heart disease and high blood pressure.

"Benefits were reported by the authors of these studies in cardiovascular and respiratory function in healthy subjects and in patients who had undergone coronary artery bypass surgery as well as in patients with heart failure, hypertension, acute myocardial infarction, arthritis and multiple sclerosis."

Bob Weatherall, secretary of the British Council of Chinese Martial Arts, welcomed the findings.

"The health aspects of Tai Chi are well documented," he told BBC News Online.

"It is used extensively in hospitals in China to improve the health of patients. Hospitals in England have started using it too.

"Tai Chi is all about breathing and posture. It's about getting the mind and body to work together. Some people call it moving meditation.

"Most people practice it for its health benefits and for stress relief."

### **Martial art calms councillor down:**

From: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/lancashire/3678263.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/lancashire/3678263.stm)  
(May 2, 2004):

A North West councillor says he has found the perfect way of taking the heat out of council chamber debates.

Robert Wynne, leader of Blackpool Council's Liberal Democrats, believes the Korean martial art taekwondo can help as tempers rise in the chamber.

"I can keep calm by using the power of my mind I have acquired through taekwondo," said Councillor Wynne.

The 47-year-old said some of his fellow councillors could benefit from the discipline and exercise it provides.

"There's a lot of unfit councillors, not just in Blackpool. I think they could all do with looking after themselves."

Councillor Wynne first got involved in the sport two and a half years ago as a way of helping to keep his family fit.

"All the kids have taken to it, and really stuck at it, as has my wife and myself."

### **Tai Chi may aid in arthritis treatment:**

From: <http://www.cnn.com/2004/HEALTH/03/12/tai.chi/index.html>  
(May 5, 2004):

When it comes to working out, no exercise regimen is "one size fits all," but one particular martial art form comes pretty close.

According to a review article in the Archives of Internal Medicine, the ancient martial art of Tai Chi not only improves strength, balance and flexibility in older people, but it also has positive effects on chronic health conditions like multiple sclerosis and joint problems.

In fact, the Arthritis Foundation has looked to Tai Chi as treatment for arthritis.

The Arthritis Foundation's program is based on Dr. Paul Lam's "Tai Chi for Arthritis" program.

Lam, who is now 53, developed osteoarthritis in his 20s and used Tai Chi as a way to control the disease.

While there are no published studies proving whether Tai Chi can reduce pain and inflammation associated with arthritis, participants report benefits ranging from pain relief to lower blood pressure.

But even though Tai Chi appears to have numerous benefits to participants, it is still too early for physicians to begin prescribing Tai Chi as a remedy for chronic health problems because many of the past studies had design flaws, according to Dr. Chenchen Wang, the author of this most recent report.

Wang urges patients with chronic health problems take precautions before beginning a Tai Chi practice, because for some people Tai Chi could worsen joint problems and other symptoms of arthritis.

So as the saying goes, be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

### **Tai Chi 'can treat heart failure':**

From: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/3728174.stm>  
(October 9, 2004):

Tai Chi can help people with heart failure, doctors believe.

A US study of 30 patients found regular classes gave patients better movement and reduced BNP levels, a measure of heart failure.

A number of the patients attended twice weekly classes for 12 months while a second group had standard treatment.

The British Heart Foundation said the study was "excellent news" and Tai Chi could be adopted into treatment programmes in the UK in the future.

More than 800,000 in the UK have heart failure, which, unlike a heart attack, happens when the heart gradually loses the ability to pump blood around the body efficiently.

Commenting on the findings in the American Journal of Medicine, Cathy Ross, a cardiac nurse at the BHF, said: "Studies have been done on this before and have shown it helps.

"This research does add to what is already available but it was quite a small study.

"More research is now needed on just how beneficial it can be but we could certainly see it being used in standard procedure in the UK at some point.

"People with heart failure require less strenuous exercise and sustained but gentle exercise, which Tai Chi is, is ideal for them."

Gloria Yeh, of the Harvard Medical School, also said she thought the non-strenuous, low impact nature of Tai Chi was the key.

"We found that Tai Chi enhanced the quality of life and functional capacity in patients with chronic heart failure who were already undergoing standard cardiac care."

She said the Tai Chi, which has origins in Chinese martial and healing arts, had the potential to make vast improvements in the quality of life of people with heart failure.

But others remained more sceptical.

Philip Ades, of the University of Vermont, said he was concerned the Tai Chi group had extra support session with the teachers over the three-month study.

He said they also had extra social contact among other members of the Tai Chi group whereas the second group had virtually no support or social contact.

He added: "Thus, one can question whether the improvements in self-reported quality of life were a result of the physical and meditative aspects of the Tai Chi program or the benefits of social contact with participants and health care personnel."

### **East Texans find balance in ancient art of Qui Gong:**

From: <http://www.zwire.com>  
(January 23, 2005):

In the horse stance, feet far apart and squatting as if sitting on an imaginary stool, the Sifu tells Tricia Eason, along with the rest of the Tai Chi/Qui Gong class, to breath in and then release sinking lower into the stance.

Mrs. Eason does it with no pain in her expression, which some would say is amazing since she has fibromyalgia.

Just months earlier, Mrs. Eason's legs were weak with Charlie horse-like pain and had no balance or strength.

"It felt like my muscles were stretched and tied into a knot, like a rope," she said, explaining the phosphate calcium lumps that were devouring her muscles.

Her shoulders and neck would lock up, too.

"I had stopped breathing normally because I was bracing myself against the pain," she said. "I held myself rigid but I didn't notice because it happened slowly over the past four years."

Mrs. Eason has been taking Tai Chi classes at Tyler Kung Fu & Fitness and recently she has been learning Qui Gong, (sometimes spelled Qigong and pronounce chi kung), the internal art of creating and harnessing energy.

The slow-moving strengthening exercise that focuses on breathing has reduced the pain and stiffness in her muscles.

"All the things we do in class are the activities I needed," she said.

Brandon Jones, Tyler Kung Fu & Fitness instructor, or Sifu, says the difference between Tai Chi and Qui Gong is that Tai Chi is a martial art that can be sped up and used for self-defense, while Qui Gong is more stationary and not a martial art; it is only a form of exercise.

"Qui Gong appeals to people who are not interested in the martial arts aspect," he said.

Dr. Luis Fernandez, the chairman of trauma surgery at Mother Frances Hospital, said even though both Tai Chi and Qui Gong are low impact exercises, they still give the participant a cardio workout and develop muscle control and joint stability.

"This practice is also applicable for cancer survivors, because there is not too much stamina required," he said.

Barry Jacobs, 61, started learning these exercises when Jones came to his cancer institute support group every Tuesday for 30 minutes.

"After a couple months of that, I thought it was doing me some good so I looked into doing it more than once a week," Jacobs said.

The former floor covering installer with back problems got prostate cancer four years ago.

Last January, his body was not getting enough oxygen to his brain, so he had congestive heart failure. He also found out he had lung disease.

At 61, the slow exercises with an emphasis on breathing, was just what the doctor ordered.

After 11 weeks of Tai Chi, which had relieved his back pain, he went back to his pulmonary doctor.

"He asked what I was doing different because my breathing test was a lot better," Jacobs said. "I told him I was doing Tai Chi and he said I needed to continue it."

His doctor even wrote him a prescription for the exercise.

Jacobs said Tai Chi has eliminated a lot of his stress and provided good mind conditioning.

"It feels good to be around positive people and to use the muscle between my ears," he said.

Jones said both Tai Chi and Qui Gong help people who have had a stroke, hysterectomy, high blood pressure, arthritis or bursitis.

But the classes are not only for people with pain.

"Anyone can engage and benefit from these exercises, from the very young to the very old," Dr. Fernandez said.

That is why Jones is hosting a three-hour Qui Gong workshop on Saturday, to teach the basics of the exercise to all ages.

"Weight lifters do it for balance, competitive martial art fighters do it to relax and focus, and cancer survivors do it to make their body strong just to get through the day," Jones said.

Besides strength and flexibility, the ancient exercise also helps with circulation and better sleep.

"It's like a microwave effect, it gets the body in shape from the inside out," Jones said. "Chinese medicine has noted that this type of exercising helps with digestion and awakens the internal organs."

The deep breathing helps develop lung capacity and strengthens the abdominal muscles.

"Research shows the twisting motion of one exercise is great for the kidneys and stimulates blood flow around the spine, which in turn creates energy," he said. "The baby boomer generation has done aerobics, step and running in the past but they like this because it is not so taxing on the body."

Jones said Qui Gong does not require special exercise outfits or equipment.

"You just use your own gravity to tone and increase flexibility instead of using weights," he said. "If you are already a good athlete this is a great enhancement."

The muscle development and balance also makes it popular among seniors, who need it to avoid falls.

Fellow instructor, Susan Holt, encourages people to learn and practice Qui Gong or Tai Chi before a problem develops.

"Live this way and have fun instead of watching your health deteriorate and then trying to fix it later," she said.

**Doctor's study finds martial arts helps control disorder:**

From: <http://www.zwire.com>  
(March 20, 2005):

Families seeking treatment from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder typically turn to medication and counseling, but what about karate?

"What does it mean to have focus?" Deshi James Garzillo, of the Willow Grove Tiger Schulmann's Karate, asked his students at the start of class Monday night.

Garzillo talked about the results of a study showing the positive effects martial arts has on young boys with ADHD.

This is a "pretty big finding," Garzillo said. "I'm excited because people have a misconception of martial arts, and it educates the public about what we actually do."

According to the Tiger Schulmann's Web site, Dr. Matthew Morand presented the study in spring 2004 for his doctor of psychology dissertation at Hofstra University in New York. After they supported his findings, the University, and Morand, published the study.

"I took my love of psychology and martial arts and mixed them together," said Morand, who is a fan of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan.

When Morand would observe children just starting out in the Tiger Schulmann's program, he noticed that many of them had no ability to pay attention. Months later, he saw different attitudes and a new-found discipline in the same students.

This experience motivated him to search online to investigate a possible linkage between martial arts and ADHD. What he found was a lot of theories and no proof.

"Nothing had been empirically derived. I wanted to change the face of that," Morand said.

During his 12-week study, 18 non-medicated boys were divided into three test groups, according to the Morand's study.

Six of the boys took part in a Martial Arts Intervention Group through Tiger Schulmann's Karate Martial Arts Program, another group of six were involved in an Exercise Intervention Group, and the last group of six participated in a control group that did not include any kind of intervention.

Morand reported that the martial arts form of treatment showed greater success than the program using exercise.

Morand, and teachers that took part in tracking of the boys' progress, found that the group enrolled in the Tiger Schulmann's program improved the most in homework completion, academic performance and classroom participation. They were also less likely to break classroom rules, leave their seats inappropriately and call out in class.

Morand said that with exercise there is "not the same drive to direct attention to something." Improvements in behavior were also attributed to the fact that martial arts emphasizes constant focus, gives more specific attention to the kids and provides positive reinforcement in the form of a belt system, said Morand.

Tiger Schulmann's Karate specifically meets the needs of ADHD children because of its unique structure.

Morand said students learn to multitask a lot of things with Tiger Schulmann's. They must keep their attention on the instructor while combining punching, kicking and maintaining focus.

Tiger Schulmann's also utilizes a hybrid style of karate, combining karate, jujitsu and aikido.

According to Morand's study, "The Hybrid Style, allowed to generalize the intervention program to the 'overall' martial arts discipline, as oppose to just one specific discipline."

For many families, ADHD is difficult to treat and many turn to medication.

"I believe some kids can be treated effectively, however, medication does not work well for others," Morand said.

He said he feels that martial arts is an effective option for kids with ADHD.

Download study by Dr. Matthew Morand, Doctor of School & Community Psychology Certified School Psychologist, [here](#) (pdf)

### **Tai Chi reduces falls in older people - new study confirms earlier reports:**

From: <http://www.seniorjournal.com/NEWS/Fitness/5-06-27TaiChi-Falls.htm>  
(June 27, 2005):

A new study confirms what has been reported by other researchers since 1996 – Tai Chi, a martial arts form that enhances balance and body awareness through slow, graceful and precise body movements, can improve balance, build strength and reduce the risk of falls in the elderly.

The new study published in the Journal of Advanced Nursing reported on a group of fall-prone senior citizens, with an average age of 78, living in residential care. Twenty nine undertook a 12-week Tai Chi course three times a week and 30 formed the non-exercise control group.

They found that the physical fitness of the exercise group showed significant improvement, with stronger knee and ankle muscles, improved mobility and flexibility and better balance.

For example, after the exercise program had finished, the time taken by the exercise group to walk six meters had fallen by 25 per cent, while the control group took 14 per cent longer.

"As people get older they are more likely to experience falls and this can lead to some very serious health issues" says co-author Professor Rhayun Song from the Chung Nam National University in South Korea.

"Regular exercise is very important as we get older because when we get to 65 we start losing muscle strength at a rate of up to two per cent per year," Song added.

Tai Chi, an ancient Chinese martial art consisting of a series of slow, gentle, continuous movements, is particularly suitable for older people as it helps them to develop stronger muscles and better balance and concentration.

The exercise program used in the research consisted of 10 minutes of warming up exercises, 20 minutes of Sun-style Tai Chi movement and five minutes of cooling down exercises. Traditional instrumental music was used to help the group maintain slow and continuous movements and provide a soothing effect.

Both groups underwent a series of tests before the 12-week exercise program and again after it had been completed. This measured their muscle strength, balance and confidence in avoiding falls.

Participants were also asked to report any falls they experienced during the test period. 31 per cent of the exercise group said they had had a fall, compared with 50 per cent of the control group.

In the year before the research started, 66 per cent of the exercise group had reported a fall, together with 57 per cent of the control group.

"Our study shows that low-intensity exercise such as Tai Chi has great potential for health promotion as it can help older people to avoid falls by developing their balance, muscle strength and confidence" says Professor Song.

"We believe that regular exercise should be a fundamental part of caring for older people living in the community and in residential care."

Two studies in the May 1996 issue of the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society claimed to be the first involving Tai Chi to be reported by scientists in a special frailty reduction program sponsored by the National Institute on Aging (NIA).

Not only did they find the risk of falls was reduced by Tai Chi, but they reported it may be beneficial in maintaining gains made by people age 70 and older who undergo other types of balance and strength training.

In the first study, Steven L. Wolf, Ph.D., and colleagues at the Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, Ga., found that older people taking part in a 15-week Tai Chi program reduced their risk of falling by 47.5 percent. A second study, by Leslie Wolfson, M.D., and colleagues at the University of Connecticut Health Center, Farmington, found that several interventions to improve balance and strength among older people were effective. These improvements, particularly in strength, were preserved over a 6-month period while participants did Tai Chi exercises.

The projects are among several in the NIA's Frailty and Injuries: Cooperative Studies of Intervention Techniques, or FICSIT, initiative, launched in 1990 to improve physical function in old age.

Research from these and other FICSIT trials has demonstrated the benefits of strength training for older people and the value and cost-effectiveness of targeted, fall prevention programs for the elderly. It is estimated that each year falls are responsible for costs of over \$12 billion in the U.S., and the costs due to physical frailty are much higher.

The news on Tai Chi is a reminder that relatively "low tech" approaches should not be overlooked in the search for ways to prevent disability and maintain physical performance in late life. "The FICSIT studies have shown that a range of techniques, from the most sophisticated medical interventions to more 'low tech' methods, can help older people avoid frailty and falling," says Chhanda Dutta, Ph.D., Director of Musculoskeletal Research in the NIA's Geriatrics Program. "We must make sure that we look at every approach, especially relatively inexpensive ones like Tai Chi," says Dutta. "People can do this at home and with friends once they have had the proper training."

The Wolf study included 200 participants age 70 and older. The participants were divided into groups for Tai Chi, computerized balance training, and education. In addition to 15 weekly sessions in which they progressed to more complex forms of Tai Chi, the participants were asked to practice at home at least 15 minutes, twice daily. Another group received balance training using a computer-operated balance platform in which participants tried to improve control of their body sway under increasingly difficult conditions. The education group was asked to not change any of its current exercise regimens, and took part in weekly meetings on a variety of topics with a nurse gerontologist.

Wolf's group compared several factors before and after the interventions, and found improvements in certain key areas. The most notable change involved the reduction in the rate of falling for the Tai Chi group. The groups receiving computerized balance platform training did not have significantly lower rates of falling. The Tai Chi participants also took more deliberate steps and decreased their walking speed slightly compared to the other groups. Fear of falling also was reduced for the Tai Chi group. After the intervention, only 8 percent of the Tai Chi group said they feared falling, compared with 23 percent before they had the training.

"The Tai Chi group seemed to have more confidence," says Wolf, noting that "they had an increased sense of being able to do all that they would like to do." Wolf notes that almost half of the Tai Chi participants chose to continue meeting informally after the study was finished.

The Connecticut FICSIT site used sophisticated techniques for balance and strength training. Some 110 participants, averaging age 80, received training for 3 months. They were divided into four groups: one group received balance training in 45-minute sessions three times per week, including a computerized balance platform (of a different type than the one used in the Wolf study) as well as low-tech balance exercises; another took part in resistance training and weight lifting three times a week to improve strength; a third group did both balance and strength training, and a fourth "education" group participated in sessions on fall prevention and stress management. Everyone in the study took part in weekly Tai Chi classes for 6 months following the intensive training period.

The people in the study were evaluated before undergoing any training, immediately after the training, and after a 6-month follow-up Tai Chi program. The interventions of major focus in the study -- intensive balance and strength training -- produced marked effects. Participants had a 25 to 50 percent improvement in three different measures of balance after completing balance training, while strength training resulted in a 17 percent improvement in strength. Some of the gains immediately following the balance and strength training were lost after 6 months of the Tai Chi follow-up program. However, the participants tested significantly higher than they had before the interventions began.

Without a comparable group who did not receive Tai Chi training after exercise training, it is difficult to know for certain whether the Tai Chi contributed to maintaining gains in strength and balance. Wolfson noted that study participants might have done even better at the end of the maintenance phase had they continued the more intensive balance and strength training, but he also suggested that Tai Chi might be further studied as a less intensive way to hold onto the benefits of prior strength and balance training.

The NIA, part of the National Institutes of Health, leads the Federal effort conducting and supporting research on the aging process and the diseases and disabilities that accompany advancing age. The Institute's program focuses on biomedical, clinical, and social and behavioral research, and supports the Claude D. Pepper Older American Independence Centers at medical centers across the U.S., whose research is aimed at maintaining healthy function well into old age.

### **Belle Meade residents enjoy Tai Chi:**

From: <http://www.thepilot.com/news/031006bellemeade.html>  
(March 9, 2006):

Residents at Belle Meade are enjoying the many health benefits of tai chi.

Tai chi (pronounced "tie chee") is an ancient Chinese system of exercise that emphasizes slow, focused movements. The philosophical origins of the system of slow, graceful, meditative movements known as tai chi lie in the Taoism of ancient China, where, in sixth century B.C., Lao Tsu wrote in the Tao Te Ching, "Yield and overcome; bend and be straight."

One major benefit of practicing tai chi is the improvement of balance. In older people, this improvement in balance can protect them from falling.

In a study conducted by researchers at Emory University in Atlanta titled "Reducing Fragility and Falls in Older Persons: An Investigation of Tai Chi and Computerized Balance Training," there was a 47.5 percent reduction of falls, along with a reduced fear of falling, in the tai chi participants.

Participants in the tai chi group study also provided anecdotal reports of aborted falls and improved awareness of environment and body maneuvers when presented with unexpected disturbances. The authors of the study concluded that their data suggest that tai chi can significantly influence functioning and well-being in the elderly,

providing “some appreciation for why this exercise form has been practiced by older Chinese for more than three centuries.”

Other noted benefits of tai chi in the medical community are the lowering of blood pressure, the improvement of heart and blood vessel function, improved sleep in seniors, and ease of joint pain.

“Tai chi increases circulation, which may improve joint function,” says researcher Patricia Adler, a registered nurse with Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. “It also stabilizes the joint structure and strengthens the soft tissue that supports the joint, which may help reduce pain.”

Another surprising benefit that is being studied is that researchers are finding that tai chi may improve a person’s immunity to shingles.

According to a study in the September 2003 issue of Psychosomatic Medicine, 15 weeks of tai chi seems to have helped protect a group of eighteen elderly adults against the shingles virus.

One week after the study was completed, immune-cell levels increased an average of nearly 50 percent in those who practiced tai chi, while the control group showed no improvement. The results will need to be confirmed by larger studies, but the suggestion is that a little tai chi could be a great value to seniors whose immunities naturally decline with age.

The risk of injury in tai chi is very low, which is an advantage at any age but exceptionally important for older people who are starting a new exercise program. Tai chi is particularly beneficial for elderly arthritis patients because they are often homebound and the exercises can be practiced anywhere and require no special equipment.

Tai chi classes, called Balance Club, are held for residents, in the clubhouse at Belle Meade, twice a week and are led by instructor Lee Holbrook.

### **Slo Kwon-do is local invention:**

From:

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2006603150310>  
(March 15, 2006):

Heather Daly of Brighton held a black belt in tae kwon-do before developing disabling, chronic pain six years ago. A couple of years ago, she wanted to get back into martial arts but wanted a safer approach that supported a healthy mind and body and didn't include sparring or board breaking.

And thus was born Slo Kwon-do, as she calls it, intended as a holistic way for adults to relieve stress and improve fitness.

"Many adults are intimidated by the high-impact classes and boot-camp style of many tae kwon-do and karate schools," says Daly, 36, who has a doctorate in toxicology and a master's in spiritual psychology.

Her approach emphasizes breathing and meditation during both fast and slow movements, including a cardio workout, martial arts patterns and self-defense.

### **Tai chi - smooth move for arthritis:**

From: <http://www.fortwayne.com/mld/newssentinel/14286985.htm>  
(April 7, 2006):

Laura Henry had severe shoulder pain from osteoarthritis. She couldn't pick up a gallon of milk or reach for a dish from her cupboard. Lifting weights or riding her bike was unthinkable.

She saw only negligible improvement from anti-inflammatory drugs and exercises prescribed by her doctor. "I had done all the exercises, and I took all the medicines," she says. "My range of motion was very poor. I didn't know what to do."

Then she read about a new class in a flier from her corporate fitness center: Tai Chi for Arthritis.

"I'd done everything else," she says. "It wasn't working. That's what led me to try it."

Nearly two years later, Henry, 52, attends tai chi class twice a week. She's pain-free and more active than she's been in years.

Tai Chi for Arthritis is recommended by the Arthritis Foundation. The series of slow, gentle movements offers pain-reducing benefits to those with joint sensitivities, says Jeff Savage, director of programs for the Arthritis Foundation of Texas.

Exercise is essential to healthy living and a key component of managing arthritis, Savage says. Yet many sufferers complain they cannot find an exercise program that doesn't cause more pain.

"We spent a lot of time researching the problem," Savage says. "What are the programs that are easy on your joints but still give you physical benefits?" Subsequently, the Arthritis Foundation teamed up with instructors to offer classes at area senior centers and elsewhere.

"It's a unique program. It's taking off at just about every senior center," says Margaret Gillett, senior center supervisor for the city of Allen, Texas.

Australian physician Paul Lam, a tai chi master, developed Tai Chi for Arthritis to help his own osteoarthritis.

"Without regular exercise, the joints become stiffer and more painful, muscles lose strength, bones weaken, stamina diminishes, blood circulation slows and the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes increases," Lam wrote in a 2005 article published on his Web site. "The answer is to develop an exercise program that is safe and effective for your own condition and capabilities."

Tai chi originated in ancient medical texts in early 700 B.C. and became more formalized as a system of personal health and combat exercises in late 900 A.D., says Chris Bouguyon, a senior instructor of Tai Chi for Arthritis.

There are five primary styles of tai chi: Chen, Yang, Wu, Hao and Sun, all of which are based in martial arts, he says. Each involves a series of movements that engage the body's joints, muscles and tendons, says Bouguyon, who teaches classes around the area.

Tai Chi for Arthritis is based on the Sun style, featuring fluid, gentle movements. Anyone who can stand can do this. No special clothing or equipment is needed.

Bouguyon, a 28-year veteran of martial arts, emphasizes posture, breathing and body awareness, and teaches students how to release tension. For Henry and many others, the benefits have been far-reaching. In her first six weeks, she noticed greater range of motion. "I also strengthened my knees and ankles and improved my balance."

After only six months, she was able to halve her pain medications; after eight months, she quit taking anti-inflammatory drugs.

Her self-confidence soared. "I've gone from not being able to do the everyday things because it's so painful to: `Let's try this. Let's do that!'"

Henry believes so strongly in the benefits that she became certified as an instructor. "I don't want to ever go back to that pain again," she says.

She's not alone. Consider Debbie Brost of Allen, Texas.

Brost, 58, had nagging back pain. She figured it was something she had to live with at her age. Getting in and out of bed was the worst. After three one-hour Tai Chi for Arthritis classes, the pain was gone.

"You don't have to take a pill and wait for it to work or not work," she says. "Now, when I see anyone creaking around, I say they need to do tai chi."

Brost says focusing on posture has played a major role. Now she can alleviate a twinge of pain simply by sitting up straighter. She credits the deep breathing with having a healing effect by delivering more oxygen.

The benefits have extended beyond her back. The experience did wonders for her outlook on life. She described herself as a "totally uncoordinated couch potato" before taking up tai chi in January. Now she has newfound energy and is taking painting and pottery. "I don't think I've been so excited and felt so good about anything. It's got to be the tai chi."

### **Octogenarian teaches tai chi to help other seniors heal:**

From: <http://www.delawareonline.com>  
(April 23, 2006):

It's difficult to apply one word to Helen R. Thomas' perspective on tai chi.

Better to use several -- moving meditation, peace, spiritual expression and healing.

At 85, she's such a believer in the benefits of the gentle martial art that she's improvising a new sitting form of tai chi for people using wheelchairs and canes.

On Thursday she was teaching one of the classes to her seated students of the Lorelton, a Wilmington assisted-living facility where Thomas has an apartment.

"One woman, who has severe Parkinson's disease could barely move her hands, when we started," says Thomas. "Now she can open them and close them. That's a victory for her."

Eight years ago, Thomas feared she might become a cripple from the arthritis in her back and knees. She did not relish surgery, turning in desperation to tai chi, which she now credits with healing the pain and stiffness in her joints.

She feels fortunate to have found Kevin Sun, a tai chi master whose Sun Taijiquan School offers classes at several New Castle County locations. Thomas is so accomplished that she teaches for the school and continues to take classes with Sun.

Thomas is one of his most accomplished students, he says. She proved it on a trip to Beijing in August 2005. At the International Wushu (Martial Arts) Tournament Thomas won a silver medal in her age group, losing the gold to a woman 22 years her junior.

Thomas teaches five tai chi classes a week and is able to practice several hours a day, crediting the martial art with keeping her limber and mentally alert.

"I tell the sitting people that when they tired and have to stop doing tai chi with their body, to do it with their mind," Thomas says. "I believe it will heal you even if don't physically move the body."

### **Kung fu's healing qualities:**

From: <http://www.burbankleader.com/news/story/44151p-66501c.html>  
(April 26, 2006):

It may have been in slow motion; it may have been just part of practice, but when Tammy Johnston first started taking kung fu in Burbank, she cringed at every feigned kick and slow-moving fist.

"At first, you do sets," Johnston said. "No matter how slowly we did them, I would hold my breath and close my eyes."

Eventually, however, Johnston began to keep her eyes open, and the classes began to help her recover from a past of domestic abuse. Now, Johnston is using her experience to give back to other abuse victims -- teaching them confidence and focus through martial arts.

"Tammy was motivated from her soul to change her life," said Tatyanna Wilkerson, who now serves on the board of Johnson's nonprofit. "She didn't just take small steps in changing her life, she went big."

Johnston started the group, FOCUS -- Friends of Courage United Survivors -- five years ago, developing it straight from her long recovery.

"In 1995, I was almost killed in domestic violence," she said. "He broke my back, I had multiple fractures and concussions -- right now I still have a ruptured disk that pushes in my spinal cord."

A year after the attack, Johnston was still in recovery when she wandered by a kung fu school in Burbank.

"Everybody in there was laughing and having a good time," she remembered. "So I joined up."

From the first month, the classes helped expedite Johnston's mental and physical recovery. The first change came with her ability to concentrate on the movements.

"After the attack, I lost my ability to focus and concentrate," she said. "You're always thinking, 'What if he comes to get me? What if he takes the kids?'"

When doing tai chi, she would be occupied by the movement of a hand and the extension of an arm. Slowly, Johnston moved in to practicing kung fu. Eventually, she started teaching some moves to the women in her support groups at the Glendale YWCA.

"I would go over there after they had group therapy," she said. "I would stay for an hour and whoever wanted to would stay and do tai chi with me."

The group grew, and Johnston moved the practices to McCambridge Park in Burbank.

The growing interest also encouraged her to form the nonprofit to help fund a second phase of the program introducing students to kung fu.

"I talked to my kung fu uncles and aunts, and we decided to add a kung fu class," Johnston said. "They're taught phase two by a master -- they really liked that."

Johnston enlisted one of her own kung fu teachers Master Wei Zhong Tang, to teach the class.

"We pay the masters that teach," she said. "That's why we have to do the fundraising."

Adding kung fu gives students the extra security of learning self-defense, Johnston said.

Now that she has a steady following of students, Johnston is looking for a permanent home in Burbank -- many of her students don't feel entirely comfortable out in the open.

On Saturday, Johnston will celebrate the spirit that first attracted her to martial arts at the World Tai Chi Day in Pasadena, where tai chi workshops will be held to celebrate the healing properties of the practice.

"We have more than 60 countries participating," she said. "They unite by participating in the tai chi form, to create a tidal wave of healing energy.

"That's the kind of thing that helped heal my back," she said.