

Meditation : a State of Being — Chief Instructor Brett Wagland

Today we hear a lot about practising **mindfulness** which has many benefits. Basically, we can say that it is **bringing the light of awareness into our lives**. When our mind or attention is present, our activities have a different feel and quality to them. They immediately go from unconscious to conscious. When we act or live unconsciously, we are not living to the full. We respond out of habit and become robotic. We seem to be living in our heads, usually fantasizing about an event in the future or reminiscing about the past. Mindfulness helps us stay in the moment. This allows us to be at our best in whatever we are doing. **When the mind is distracted, our energy is also dissipated**. Instead of clarity, we experience fogginess. It is similar to walking through a pond and stirring the silt at the bottom. This causes the water to become cloudy and makes it impossible to see anything beneath the surface.

Meditation is all about mindfulness. **Tai Chi** is often referred to as meditation in motion. It is **the ultimate in mindfulness training**. Precision is in every part of a movement. It requires coordination of the whole body as well as awareness of the feelings of energy. As we become more proficient with our practice, we are able to go deeper into the body and begin to feel the pulsating energy and power being transferred from the legs to the hands and through the spine. We gradually take our awareness to deeper levels into the physical body and feel its texture and space distinguishing between the solid and empty. For example, we can focus this awareness on the spine and begin to identify each vertebra and the space between them. This process of applying the mind to our practice is called yi (intention) in Chinese. **The term yi is also associated with awareness and feeling that has been refined through training and can be applied to any task or activity**. This ability develops greater sensitivity in the body in terms of how it feels and moves. **It opens up our inner landscape and brings us a greater sense of harmony, clarity and functionality** to this incredible organism called the human being.



One of our students, Ben Schutte who has 30 years clinical experience in chiropractic, mentioned the latest research on the brain's capacity to learn. It shows powerful evidence of atrophy in the cerebellum when we do not activate certain parts of the brain due to lack of movement. The modern phenomenon of people spending an inordinate amount of time on a smart phone, tablet and computer could have a detrimental effect on our health and well being. In a recent Emei Qigong workshop, Fontane explained the 5 causes of illness. Lifestyle is one of the major contributors to dis-ease. **Sitting too long while using the eyes too much for a prolonged period of time is a very common way to invite illness into your life.**



The ancient Chinese and Indian cultures were constantly researching and devising **exercises that could produce better health, healing and energetic outcomes**. Stories abound in China of ordinary people developing extraordinary abilities by engaging in certain mind-body training. Studies on mindfulness practices have demonstrated that it is a powerful tool in the development of the brain. With more evidence becoming available to support the benefits of mindfulness based exercise, it is clear that taking part in this type of activity is a must, especially in this modern lifestyle.

Practices, such as Tai Chi, Xinyi, Bagua and qigong are called internal arts because they use the mind in a refined way to change the body. Also, they use movement patterns to affect the nervous system which in turn exercises the brain. The interesting thing about the above mentioned arts is that they **teach you to integrate the mind and body through movement into a complex dynamic which affects**



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the brain on a deep level. These arts also teach us to reduce habitual patterns of tension in the body and mind. This leads to greater levels of blood and energy circulation which in turn raises the probability of healing and improved health. This contributes to more efficient functioning in everyday life.

In a time where our medical and welfare institutions are facing increasing financial and resource demands, it is important to empower individuals to take a greater responsibility in their daily lifestyles. We know that **those who are actively involved in a course such as Tai Chi, Qigong and/or Wu Dao Gong, are better able to self-manage their health and well being**. Instead of being a burden on themselves and the system, they become a positive testimonial to the benefits of looking after themselves. They experience the joy of practice which is constantly awakening them to the treasures within.



This term, I have commenced conducting weekly classes for the residents of the Alcohol and Drug Withdrawal Unit in the Canberra Hospital. This has been a great experience for me and the participants. At first, I didn't know what to expect. Generally, we are all aware of problems associated with drugs and alcohol. However, do we really know and understand the people who suffer from these addictions? We are usually influenced by the media's stereotyped portrayal of such problems. Yet these people are mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, doctors, lawyers, office workers, chefs or any other person in our community. **In the class, they are simply human beings**. I feel honoured that they want to try Tai Chi even though it is only for an hour, making a positive impact on their mental and emotional state.

They are a small group of people, standing in the sun, experiencing the joy of movement and the peace of relaxation and inner awareness, a million miles away from the everyday problems they face. Coming back to our inner being is always available to us. We just need the opportunity to be in touch with it. **That moment of peace and calm purifies and uplifts us. It transcends conceptual thoughts. It is a direct experience of our nature.** As one participant said, "It's better than a Friday night out with the boys." Another commented that deep emotions were being released while others experienced contentment and relaxation. Some could feel warmth in their hands and were amazed that this energy existed in them. The experience of being able to feel good without relying on any substance is such a powerful revelation. Now they know what is possible and that peace and calm lie within them. The hospital staff were surprised at the powerful impact of just one Tai Chi lesson.



Tai Chi, Wu Dao Gong or the internal arts may not be a panacea to all our health and emotional challenges but it is **a significant step in a positive direction**. Learning these arts makes our lives a meditation and has a positive effect on us and those around us. In life, we cannot control the things around us but we can influence how we feel and function. At the end of the day, this is what we really need. ☸☸☸