

## KEEP IT MOVING!

The motto at *Fylde Tai Chi Association*, “*Keep it Moving*”, reflects the advice of the ancient physician *Sun Simiao* (aka *King of Medicine*; 581-682) who informs us, “*Flowing water does not stagnate, active hinges do not rust*”, implying the need to remain active in order to maintain health.

**“*Flowing water does not stagnate, active hinges do not rust*”.**

Western medicine has recently begun to place more emphasis on this important common-sense approach to healthcare, which had gradually been neglected over the years, in part due to the dominance of allopathic medicine and a developing over-reliance upon it and its facilitators. Latterly, but perhaps perfunctorily, even the [NHS](#) stress the importance of physical activity on a personal level and within the community when they advise...

***Move more*** “*However you choose to move, it’s all good for your health and wellbeing*”.

***Get active in your community*** “*Look for organised activities in your area, like dance classes or a walking group*”.

However, this clearly important key element of good health and well-being was, throughout 2020-22, insanely dismissed and completely rejected because of ill-considered, scientifically unsound, and draconian infectious disease measures. The effect being that now the NHS is becoming swamped with patients manifesting chronic and acute mental and physical health issues.

It is a societal health imperative that we return to the wonderful social, and physical activities available to the good folk of the UK, such as dancing, walking, musical, intellectual, and other social interactions... including *Tai Chi* and *Chi Gung*

### **AN ACTIVITY SUITABLE FOR ALL**

All around the world, people of all ages are taking up the exercise methods of [Tai Chi and Chi Gung](#). Their gentle and flowing movements provide a whole-body exercise with the added benefit of physical relaxation and mental calm.

Unlike other forms of exercise, it is not limited by the weather, time or space, and because it does not rely on strength, speed or prowess, it can be enjoyed by people of all abilities, age and gender.

Although *Tai Chi* requires an element of learning and memory, a useful characteristic of *Tai Chi*, but more so *Chi Gung*, is that it can be adapted to most physical requirements and limitations.

### **WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF TAI CHI AND CHI GUNG WITH REGARD TO CHINESE MEDICAL THEORY?**

*Chi Gung* means working with or studying the body’s energy. Practitioners vary in their level of understanding and use. For some, the nature of *Chi* or energy plays a role in the spiritual and emotional aspects of their lives; for some it enhances the effectiveness of martial skills, adepts might utilise it for advanced spiritual practices but for most folk, nowadays, it is utilised purely for physical and emotional/mental health benefits.

Touching on Chi Gung theory, the physical nature of the movements stimulates the conversion of the *essence* of life that we inherit from our parents - and which we ingest from food and the environment - into Chi. In addition, the methods of Tai Chi and Chi Gung enhance its presence and flow in subtle energy *channels* and *vessels*. The optimal conversion, storage and flow of Chi prevents stagnation in the channels and vessels and consequently in the subtle and material organ systems and aids their effective functions (See [Yang, 1989](#)). Furthermore, the harmonious mental and physical actions of Chi Gung aid optimal use of the essence of life and Chi and thus resist their untimely depletion.

Although the energetic theory of Chi Gung is commonly disregarded by western medical science, evidence of the effectiveness of its practise is becoming clear (see [Understanding Chi Kung](#) - Chapter 3, A Scientific Perspective); although, for the Chi Gung “devotee” no such evidence is necessary - “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”. However, for those who “follow the science” and find the nature of energy flow and vessels, etc. a little “ethereal”, the next section might provide a more acceptable explanation.

### **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TAI CHI AND CHI GUNG ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING?**

Movement and activity are essential for mental, physical, and immune health - generally speaking. Here is how Tai Chi and Chi Gung helps:

- ☉ Provides a gentle, whole-body exercise.
- ☉ Gently maintains and develops strength of muscles - important in resisting age-related muscle loss (sarcopenia) - Declining muscle strength and reduced physical activity contribute to physical dysfunction. Healthy muscle offsets frailty, helps prevent falls, and plays a major role in many body functions such as immune regulation.
- ☉ The slow, weight bearing postures contribute to bone strength. However, correct instruction on posture and movement is required to ensure injury, which might result from inappropriate weight bearing and undue pressure on articulating joints, is avoided.
- ☉ Mobilises joints and tissues to help maintain flexibility and tissue health – the nature of articulating joints is such that they require movement to ensure the exchange of nutrients and waste within them: “*Active hinges do not rust*”.
- ☉ Breathing methods encourage relaxation and oxygenation of tissues and removal of waste. At FTCA we focus on correct, natural regulation of breathing, not the yogic breathing adopted by certain adepts for specific purposes.
- ☉ Rhythmic bending and stretching movements aid circulation of blood/lymph. Effective muscular action (including complete, effective breathing) aids the heart in its function of delivery of essential nutrients and removal of waste to and from all the tissues of the body and prevents stasis: “*Moving water does not stagnate*”.
- ☉ Slow and controlled movements help improve posture, balance, and mobility. There are several reasons why good posture is important, not least of all to ensure unimpeded function of respiration and circulation. By this and continued training in slow rhythmic and stable movement and posture we at least help maintain or enhance the structures of our nervous system and skeletal muscles

that are important in control of stability and balance.

- ☉ Develops mindfulness, which helps one to relax, and reduce *stress*. Stress is a major factor in immune suppression. Stress for whatever reason is an automatic response to life situations, the extent of that response is due to an individual's subjective perception of the *stressor*. Whatever that perception, by learning to slow down our physical and mental processes and develop mindfulness within the exercise, we give ourselves some space, then we can begin to see things with a little more clarity and relaxed perception. As the Buddhist teacher Nyanaponika Mahathera points out:

***“To counter the unhealthy effects of the frantic pace of modern life, it is imperative that, in our free time, we try consciously to pause and slow down. Beyond the immediate effects of an exercise session, slowing down exercises influence the pace of the daily rhythm in what we do, how we talk and think”.***

- ☉ If nothing else then, a session of Chi, Gung and/or Tai Chi provides a little space and a break from the “*frantic pace of modern life*”.

A unique aspect of Tai Chi / Chi Gung is that it requires no special equipment and can be practised anywhere, anytime. When practised in a group setting, you get to meet other friendly peace-loving folk.

#### **WHAT WE DO IN THE SESSIONS AT FYLDE TAI CHI ASSOCIATION**

Each week we practice the same exercises, with some variation. That is because the point of the sessions is to help ensure we “*Keep it Moving*” and help settle the “*monkey mind*”, it's not to pamper our need for constant distraction – although we do have fun! On occasions, we include variations and discuss the more [philosophical](#) and [energetic](#) underlying theories. Most importantly it is about doing the exercises, correctly and with mindfulness. As Master John Farrell points out:

***“In one sense, the character of the movement is less important; any ‘complete’ set of movements will suffice, provided they are generated from a strong root, performed correctly and with mindfulness... Correct practice of Chi Gung engenders clarity of mind and consequently calms the emotions and invigorates the spirit.”***

Depending on individual needs and preferences, at FTCA we practise Sun style and Yang style [Tai Chi](#) along with various [Chi Gung](#) forms

**LONG STORY, SHORT!**

The real benefit of Tai Chi and Chi Gung is found in regular practise, which contributes to a good physical and mental constitution and an improved feeling of well-being. As [Master Chen Man Ching](#) pointed out when asked about the reason to practise...

***“...so that when you are old enough to understand what life is all about, you are still able to enjoy it”***



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