



Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout January 9, 2022

How to practice T'ai Chi

No one really likes the word, practice, so let me reframe that and suggest that performing T'ai Chi every day is good for your health. Don't think of it as practice, but more of a gift you give to yourself to improve your overall sense of wellbeing.

Some of you may not want to try T'ai Chi at home for a couple of reasons: the first is fear of making a mistake and the second is not remembering what we did in class. There are many other reasons but these are the two most related to T'ai Chi itself. Let me put these two reasons in some perspective. Don't be concerned about making a mistake. The goal is to keep moving. Any mistake that is made can easily be addressed in class. So put your mind at ease. The second is not being able to remember the routines I teach in class. I understand completely. But there are simple movements that you can remember. These motions may not be a part of the Tai Chi routine but they are certainly foundational movements that are the building blocks of T'ai Chi proper.

So, where to start? First, find a place in your home that is quiet and you find peaceful. Consider this place sacred in that it is free from the outside world and those things we all have on our mind. For a few minutes each day, create this physical space. Then, create space in your mind that is focused on the present free from the past and future.

Some people like to do this with music that is soothing and calming. The goal is to calm and soothe the mind, followed by the body, and then the spirit.

Focus on your posture, breathing and giving your body and mind permission to be soft and calm. Shake off the trail dust a little bit to settle your mind. Let your eyes soften as your breath becomes slower and deeper.

Find the bubbling well spring; drop your shoulders, sink the chest, bend your knees and sit into the bubbling well spring.

Breathe in deeply as you lift your arms, pulling your chi (qi) up through your feet, into the knees, hips, lower dantien, elbows, up through your chest and releasing into the universe through the tip of your head and fingertips. As you lower your arms, breathe out through your nose slowly and calmly. If your mind wanders off into some concern or worry, breathe deeper and focus on how your body feels. That nagging thought usually dissipates into the air. Stand tall, not straight, elongating the spine. Remember to drop the shoulders and let them be still.

Open your palms as your hands lower and lift air from side to side as if touching the sides of the room. Circle around the elbow and slowly push air downward. Repeat.

If you want to do more, perform the first 2-5 postures in a set of your choosing. Beginners can perform the first few postures of set 1, intermediate students, set 2 and advanced students, set 3. Or, you can perform a posture you like. Repetition is the way to learn T'ai Chi.

Strive to be soft and relaxed. T'ai Chi is a journey, not a destination.



Peace, *Linda*