

Finding a Tai Chi Teacher

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Philosophically, Tai Chi is formless, thus there are many ways to guide you to the One which is your mind and body harmonized with Nature. There are many styles of meditation, Tai Chi and martial arts. None is superior to the other. Different styles have their own movement "flavors," ways to emphasize the inner focus and ways to achieve the goal, such as achieving better health, improving martial arts skills or reaching inner enlightenment. If you like one style and want to master it, then it is a good choice. Research the background and difficulty of a style before making your decision. Find one that is suitable for you and keep practicing it. If you can, learn both calm and moving styles of meditation. You will find that practicing these styles together will not only help you achieve better health but also help you master the forms.

When you are looking for a teacher or an instructor, look at what he or she can do and what he or she believes in. Do not fall prey to his or her costume and talk. Excessive commercialization of the things we want to buy normally means that the product may not be that good. A person who charges a lot of money for his or her teaching may not have much to offer. A good-hearted person who charges you an insignificant amount may become your life long teacher and friend. To see a person is not to listen to his or her speech; it is to see his or her action.

You can not learn Tai Chi over night. First you need to learn the posture routine and understand the martial arts background of each posture and its moving segments. Then you need to refine them by learning how to shift your body weight and how to associate your breath with each movement. Eventually, you will learn how to get into the meditative mind state.

An instructor who claims that he or she is the only person in the U.S. of the X Chinese martial arts style or that he or she has mastered over twenty styles is always questionable. To have learned something once upon a time is different than to have already mastered something. It takes a long time to do any one style right. Many great Masters practice only one style during their entire lifetime.

Si Fu (or Shi Fu, Master) or Lao Shi (Teacher) are the titles we use to call our teachers; they have earned this privilege by their skill and action. If the instructor insists that you call him or her Si Fu and does not respect you, you better walk away on the first day. To ask others to call you Si Fu is laughable and arrogant. Respect should be mutual.

Traditionally, there is no color belt system in Chinese martial arts. There are no Unions or Federations. You play Tai Chi or practice Meditation for your own

health or for protection. When a Master accepts you as his student, your relationship is almost like a father and son. The bond between you both can be lifelong. All the Master's students are like your brothers and sisters. A Master usually does not like his students to flaunt his name. A student's bragging of his Master's name for business is considered an insult to the Master. Everyone in your martial arts family knows how good your skill is. Keeping a low profile and showing respect to others is the best thing to do.

No organization can certify a person's inner self or offer ranks. The only one who can tell how successful you are is yourself. A colorful certificate means nothing in reality (your back pain or stress will not disappear on your graduation day). Tai Chi and Meditation are skills for a person's better life and inner enlightenment. Using Tai Chi and Meditation for power playing and domination is against its philosophy. When Tai Chi becomes a business, the spirit dies with it.

There are no secrets to Meditation, Tai Chi or any other of the martial arts. "Secret" is a very popular word people like to use these days. Many people before us have already figured out things we may want to master; but they cannot simply give us a key to those inner doors. We have to learn to make those keys by ourselves because our play and practice are inner mind games. Time and hard work will let you achieve your goal.

As Lao Zi once said, a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. If you never start, you will never reach your goal. If you quit in the middle, you will not get there either.

If you want to improve your health or engage in self-healing, you cannot achieve the best result by just meditating or playing Tai Chi every day. You need to have a balanced diet and you may have to change your lifestyle. Be happy and have the willingness to help other people.

The highest value is water.
Water benefits All Things, and yet it does not contend.
It stays in the places which others dislike and stays there in calm.
Therefore it is close to the Tao.
–*Tao Te Ching*

We all have Chi inside us, as well as Yin and Yang, good and evil. Be a good-hearted person. Be humble. Like water, balance the force.

Visit hsvtaichi.com for more information about the author and his Tai Chi class.