

Anecdotally Yours

By WTS Staff

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A theme that can be seen repeated in many of the student profiles that we've published from time to time over the years is that of the benefits people have found in playing the arts of T'ai Chi and Qigong. McElroy Laoshi tells us that he finds sharing such anecdotal results is better received than citing study results with percentages of this and percentages of that. He reminds us, though: "Mileage may vary."

The Most Dramatic

Laoshi admits that there's nothing more astonishing than hearing someone say, "You've saved my life!" He explains that there was one student on the mat who credited his time with Water Tiger for breaking his chain of addiction. There was also a student who told Laoshi that the focus T'ai Chi and Qigong places on the breath broke a cycle of shallow breathing that she felt was contributing to a downward spiral in her health.

The Oddest

"T'ai Chi strips away distractions and helps us focus," says Laoshi. "Yet, I can't tell you how surprised I am when people tell me that they feel they've been able to become more organized due to their time on the mat or in the room."

Proactive Behavior Physicalized

"Four ounces to repel one thousand pounds" reflects the redirection principal of T'ai Chi and defines how T'ai Chi becomes the physical manifestation of proactive behavior. By learning to accept the energy coming at you — in the form of a memo, a conversation with a loved one, a telephone solicitation, etc. — and choosing to flow with it, you will be better able to work with the people around you and not against them.

It is from this perspective that people share how their time in the room or on the mat has helped improve their communication skills and increased their ability to be patient with others.

It is also from this particular perspective that a common reaction rises to one of Water Tiger's primary Temple Stories, *The Monkey*, *The Urn*, and *The Disciple*. Perhaps you recall the story that begins with a monkey that traps itself by holding onto an apple in an urn and ends with this bit of wisdom from the temple master:

Let us hope that you ... remember through your life to let go of those things that do not serve you, but force you to serve them.

Laoshi shares, "I've lost count of how many people have told me that hearing that story has changed the way they approach issues in their daily lives."

Helping Hands

We do them during the last week of the calendar month on the mat and, sometimes, more often in Water Tiger's public classes. They are the Shaolin Chin Na Hand Exercises. There are a plethora of success stories here — too many to list them all; but, here are a few:

- Relief from the symptoms of arthritis;
- Reduction or elimination of the symptoms of Repetitive Motion Illnesses;



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- Reversal of the progression of Dupuytren’s contracture (Palmar fibromatosis or Viking’s Disease);
- Lessening the impact of the early stages of Parkinson’s Disease;
- Increasing general hand strength, as reflected in this simple statement: "I can open a bag of peanuts without cursing."

Blood Pressure

There are some long-time students of Water Tiger that have seen positive changes in their blood pressure — to the point that their prescription medications have either been reduced or completely eliminated. There have also been reports of students using meditation techniques learned through their time with Water Tiger to eliminate “white coat syndrome” — the tendency for blood pressure to increase while waiting to see one’s personal physician.

Lower Body Strength

When people share how their legs have become stronger because of their practice, they usually cite being able to take the stairs after years of being relegated to elevators and escalators.

Pain Management

Similar to the positive blood pressure results, we’ve heard from people who have been able to reduce or end medication taken to address pain generated by the challenges of arthritis, bursitis, fibromyalgia, herniated discs, hip / knee replacement surgery, accident or other trauma, etc.

Balance

Just like the oft-cited Emory study of T’ai Chi and falls, there has been a steady stream of Water Tiger students who have reported incidents of tripping or being tripped and not falling; and / or, if they have fallen, they have reported little to no injury. They give credit to their time with T’ai Chi.

Snow

Given last winter, we’ll close with a simple phrase as a major benefit of what we do: T’ai Chi Shoveling.

