

10 Questions

for Cheryl Basil by Shirley Belcher

What is tai chi and its history?

Tai chi is considered the “supreme ultimate” martial art, and history puts its formal establishment in China around 1200 AD. Two of the most familiar tai chi styles to Americans are the 24-move short form and the Yang style form. Although tai chi is a martial art and all the movements have martial arts applications, the gentle movements involved make it more often practiced for the health benefits.

What are the benefits of tai chi?

The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi (2013) details the research results of studies concerning tai chi. The research showed that tai chi has many concrete health benefits, some of which include: improvement in balance, bone density, and leg strength; pain control; decreased high blood pressure and inflammation; and prevention and rehabilitation of cardiovascular disease. Because of its gentle nature, tai chi can be done by almost anyone at any age.

Does tai chi help with arthritis?

A number of studies (see *The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi*) suggest tai chi is a safe and effective treatment for osteoarthritis symptoms. The Arthritis Foundation advocates tai chi as a good choice for people who suffer from the discomfort of arthritis.

How is tai chi important for older adults?



Cheryl Basil demonstrates a move used in the one-hour tai chi class she teaches on Tuesdays at 11:00 AM. An ancient martial art, tai chi promotes strength, flexibility, and balance. Cheryl welcomes new students to the weekly tai chi class.

As we age, our strength, flexibility, and balance begin to wane. This process can be slowed by regular exercise. Tai chi is an excellent choice for improving all 3 of these. It is done slowly, and there is little stress placed on the body. Because tai chi is slow, it requires a focus that helps improve concentration and memory, too.

Are there any limitations to participating in the tai chi class?

While there are classes that do tai chi seated, this class is geared toward students who can stand and move. The breathing exercises we do during the first 15 minutes can be done in a seated position.

What are your qualifications for teaching tai chi?

After I achieved my black belt in kenpo karate, I chose to study a martial art that was gentler on my body. Tai chi was the perfect choice. The discipline of tai chi helps to improve any other martial art. I recently tested for and received my second-degree black belt in kempo, and I hold a first-degree brown belt (one step under black) in Filipino kali.

How many students are in the tai chi class and when does it meet?

We average 8 to 10 people depending on the season and the weather. Some people try it for a while, and others get hooked and stay for the long haul. Class meets for one hour on Tuesdays at 11:00 AM.

What are your other interests?

I spend most evenings and Saturday mornings training in and teaching martial arts to children and adults. I enjoy gardening and church activities and have been learning to play the piano (slowly!) for the past 2 years.

Who is family to you?

I became a grandmother a year ago and spend many weekends in Somerset, KY, with my oldest son and his family. We just returned from our first vacation with the baby and had a great time. My other son lives and works in Cincinnati and recently became engaged.

What is on your bucket list?

Achieve my black belt in tai chi and kali before age takes its toll! 🌱