



Slow Down the World with **T'ai Chi**

By Bill Simpson

People often ask, "What is T'ai Chi?" Is it a martial art? Is it an exercise program? Is it meditation? Is it a way of life? Yes-all the above. T'ai Chi (pronounced Tie-Chee) originated as an ancient Chinese martial art over 3000 years ago. T'ai Chi literally translates to Supreme Ultimate Boxing.

Although T'ai Chi may be used as a martial art, it is primarily used as a method of meditation and self-integration through slow, relaxed, conscious movements. Children that I have taught in summer camp call it "Karate in slow motion." The idea is to create meditation through movement; therefore, T'ai Chi offers the same positive effects as meditation with the added benefits of exercise. These benefits include reducing stress, depression and fatigue; preventing illness by boosting the immune system; lowering high blood pressure; stretching and toning the body; improving breathing and circulation; maintaining balance; enhancing focus; increasing mobility and it's FUN!

Over the centuries T'ai Chi has developed from being a fighting art to a health and longevity practice. Up until the beginning of the 20th century, Tai Chi was a very secret practice handed down within the family structure. T'ai Chi began to capture the public's eye during the late sixties, and since then, it is estimated that 20% of the world's population practices T'ai Chi. It is fast becoming one of the most popular forms of exercise on the planet. T'ai Chi is suitable for all ages, and especially seniors, because of the slow, low impact movements. Don't let the slow movements fool you though. T'ai can be a great aerobic and strength workout. After years of aerobics and weight lifting I can attest that I am in the best shape of my life simply by doing T'ai Chi.

There are many styles of T'ai Chi. The most common styles are the Yang Style, Chen Style, Wu Style and Sun Style. There are various levels of development as well. The practitioner generally begins with learning a particular form, then progresses to push hands (T'ai Chi with two people) and eventually the use of a sword.

T'ai Chi is also an integral part of China's oldest system of philosophy and spiritual practice called Taoism (pronounced Dow-ism). Taoists recognize that we are a part of nature. The way to realize our highest potential is by living in harmony with the patterns and energy of nature and the universe. The way is called Tao. Taoist believe as we practice T'ai Chi on a daily basis and incorporate its philosophy in daily life we can once again reclaim our youth like qualities. T'ai Chi helps us learn how to move



freely and naturally, connecting with the entire body, which in turn allows us to connect with nature and the universe. Through T'ai Chi we can truly become ourselves.

One does not have to be a Taoist to benefit from the practice of T'ai Chi. T'ai Chi essentially compliments this philosophy. People from all religious backgrounds practice T'ai Chi without compromising their beliefs. The fact that T'ai Chi can be used as a form of martial arts, exercise, meditation are a way of life. It is up to the practitioner how far he/she wants to take it. It can be a matter of simply taking a ten-week course or committing to a lifetime of study, or all the variables in between. The possibilities are infinite.

The bottom line and true beauty of T'ai Chi is that by mere design it is meant to help people by improving the way they handle stress. T'ai Chi literally slows down the world around us making it a less stressful place to be. In this fast-paced, high-tech world we can all benefit from that.



After being a radio personality since 1977 Bill Simpson has been traveling down a different path. Formerly Sanborn of the Carter & Sanborn morning show on Power 99, he is now a certified Holistic Health Practitioner and owner of Holistic Hands Wellness Center. Bill is now the host of Philadelphia After Hours heard Monday through Friday (7:00-Midnight) on Smooth Jazz 97.5 WJJZ and the host of Pathways to Health on Sunday mornings from 6:00 to 7:00. Podcasts of Pathways to Health are available at www.975wjz.com. You can contact Bill via email at Bill@975wjz.com.