



BY MICHAEL A. DEMARCO

When it comes to nurturing and maintaining health, many Santa Feans seek an appropriate exercise method that fits their own physical and mental makeup. If you are considering Tai Chi Chuan as an exercise, then it is important to become familiar with its fundamental theory and practice.

Its very name indicates that Tai Chi Chuan is a boxing system. Through its development as a combative art, leading practitioners gained profound insights into the human condition. They sought perfection in natural movement, uninhibited by faulty techniques or disruptive emotions.

Tai Chi proved its worth for physical fitness through the centuries, conditioning master fighters for peak performance. Fortunately, a branch of Tai Chi evolved into a holistic exercise system to be shared with the general population. Rather than focus on the combative elements, its health benefits and spiritually nurturing aspects became the focus of instruction.

What makes Tai Chi such an extraordinary exercise? There is a simple explanation: its practice helps remove kinks that are present in the body, kinks that impair one's health and invite disease.

Tai Chi looks so simple, yet it takes practice to do well: finding a kink, trying to learn how it got there, and repeating the movement for hours, over days and months, until the kink dissolves. The goal is to eventually become supple and light, yet strong.

To smooth out the kinks, a Tai Chi practitioner realizes improvements do not simply come from time spent in class. Tai Chi becomes part of one's daily life, putting the principles to use in thoughts and mundane actions. If you practice Tai Chi or another exercise form — or do nothing at all to nourish your own health — I hope this article inspires you to iron out the kinks.

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