

Tai Chi as a Modality to Self Awareness

“Is there anyone in the world whose idea of being truly healthy would not include along with a healthy body, a fine mind combined with an ease of disposition?”

Sophia Delza

The effect of mind on body and body on mind is evident every day of our lives. Fleeting glimpses of this connection between body and mind are felt by everyone at sometime in their lives, moments like, “I feel like I was walking on air”, or conversely when something bad has happened “I had a pit in my stomach” or “a knot in my throat”.

Through recent advances in science and medicine we now have scientific proof that the mind is integrally connected to the body, as is body to mind. We should be asking ourselves how to have more moments of “walking on air” than “pits in the stomach”. More moments of feeling connected and grounded than moments of feeling scattered and fragmented.

Realizing the health benefits of an aware, present and calm disposition for both body and mind should be motivation enough for us to search for a technique or a practice that can enhance our ability to stay both mindful and responsive.

“Sensing the profound importance of the power of mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn, in the late 1970’s began a project to apply these ancient ideas in a modern medical setting” Jon Kabat-Zinn formed a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) clinic in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. The MBSR program brought the ancient practice of mindfulness to individuals with a wide range of medical conditions from back pain to psoriasis. Kabat-Zinn and colleagues were ultimately able to demonstrate that MBSR training could help reduce subjective states of suffering and improve immune function, accelerate rates of healing and nurture interpersonal relationships and an overall sense of well-being. (Davidson et al., 2003).

According to recent research studies being conducted at UCLA Medical Center, mindful practices stimulate neural integration. According to these studies, individuals engaged in Mindful practices, such as tai chi and yoga have better neural integration resulting in more resilient behaviors as well as a deeper level of intra-personal and interpersonal attunement.

The practice of mindful movement in tai chi trains both the body and the mind into ever deeper levels of understanding, coordination and balance.