

STILLNESS in Motion

The moving
meditation of
T'ai Chi Chih

by rhea maze

The class moved in unison, slow and deliberate as if through water. Each set of gentle movements, led by accredited T'ai Chi Chih teachers Lisa Stroyan and Doriane Tippet, brought the students into a deeper state of relaxed focus.

One man in this T'ai Chi Chih class was there because he “gets wound up” and finds it calms him down and helps lower his blood pressure. A woman practicing next to him was there because she found it to be one of the few things she can do to help alleviate her ongoing back issues including arthritis, a ruptured disc, bone spurs, and scoliosis. Another woman was there simply because she loves to move, be part of a community, and for the sense of presence it allows her to cultivate and bring to other aspects of her life.

T'ai Chi Chih (pronounced “tie chee chuh”) consists of 19 gentle movements and one pose, rather than the 108 movements taught in traditional T'ai Chi, a centuries-old Chinese self-defense and calisthenics technique. Neither religious nor a martial art, T'ai Chi Chih encourages students to release muscular and mental effort, yet remain present, and can even be done while seated.

“The 19 movements of T'ai Chi Chih are deceptively simple, easy to learn, and accessible to all ages and ability levels,” says Stroyan, who teaches a free weekly class with Tippet at the Foothills Unitarian Church in Fort Collins. “I’ve seen quick and dramatic changes in myself and

in students in areas such as balance, posture, reduced stress levels and bodily tension, and improved emotional resilience.”

Studies have linked the practice of T'ai Chi Chih with physiological and psychological benefits including improved sleep and balance, increased feelings of well-being, reduced inflammation and help managing depression.

Stroyan found the practice helped relieve her anxiety. Tippet began practicing T'ai Chi, and later T'ai Chi Chih, after her neurologist recommended it in conjunction with medication for help managing the facial tics she suffers as a result of a previous head injury. “Practicing T'ai Chi Chih at least every other day calms the tics down and that’s a big deal for me,” she says. “It’s made a tremendous difference in my quality of life.”

In addition to mental and physical benefits, Stroyan also emphasizes the supportive sense of community that participants can find in T'ai Chi Chih classes. “When we practice in a group, all moving together, something special happens,” she says.

At the end of class, Stroyan encourages her students to practice the movements at home, even if for just a few minutes a day, and reminds them that it’s not about striving for perfection. “It’s a meditation,” she says. “It’s all about letting go.” ✨

“T'ai Chi Chih can be done by anyone, regardless of age or physical condition, and the benefits and experiences reported by students are as diverse as the students themselves.”

~ Marie Dotts, accredited T'ai Chi Chih teacher with *Flowing from Center*



Co-teacher Lisa Stroyan (left) demonstrates a movement during a T'ai Chi Chih class on the lawn of Foothills Unitarian Church. Co-teacher Doriane Tippet practices next to her.

Photo by Julie Estlick

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