

Advice for students when starting with Tai Chi

Tai Chi helps us to change.

1. Our minds and bodies get accustomed to the way we have always done things and we often have preconceived ideas and opinions about things and you come to a class (of anything that you want to learn) with preconceived ideas regarding your ability to learn.
2. Resistance to change both in body movements and opinions in our minds is the biggest drawback when starting Tai Chi.

Resistance may do the following:

1. Cause you to judge or criticise yourself to tell yourself that you are too clumsy, you think of yourself as being uncoordinated or too slow and tired to do Tai Chi.
2. Cause you to think that other people are better than you, smarter or more coordinated than you.
3. Cause you to think that maybe the teacher does not like you or will lose confidence in you.
4. Cause you to tell yourself that you are too tired, the weather is no good or find any other excuse not to go to the class.
5. That you will NEVER remember all the movements or that other students are doing better than you.
6. That if you miss a class or two that you will never be able to catch up with the rest of the class.

These are all reactions of our minds to change.

Tips to overcome this resistance

1. Come to every class. If you really cannot make it because of a valid reason, the Instructor will give you all the attention he/she could possibly can or even arrange a private class if necessary.
2. To rule out competitiveness or comparing in your mind. Remember that one of the greatest fears we have is the fear to make a fool of ourselves. A good Instructor will help every student in the class to improve their Tai Chi, and other students are too busy concentrating on their own Tai Chi to notice your mistakes.
3. Human Beings working together towards the same goals without competitiveness and comparisons become good friends and Tai Chi students and instructors become a “family”.
4. Retain your sense of humour. Laugh at yourself in a loving, understanding way.
5. Students often become obsessed with wanting to remember every movement and detail of each form (some even bringing a writing pad to class to take notes). Don't do it. Relax! Make your main objective to enjoy yourself. A good Instructor will repeat the same things over and over but at the same time add new forms or parts thereof at each class to keep the interest of everybody in the class and at the same time help those students that “believe they have problems”.
6. Many students quit Tai Chi because they feel they keep the class behind. This is just another form of resistance. A good Instructor does not believe this and WILL help each student with patience and perseverance. So please ask questions and keep asking questions. Quite often you will only ask the questions that other students are too shy to ask.
7. Remember, the more you repeat the movements the better you will do it eventually, and that goes for everybody in the class including the Instructor.

There are no good students or bad students only those who are committed and those that are not.