



Tai Chi: Evaluating Risk/Responding to Pain

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The Academy promotes tai chi for relaxation, enjoyment and its health benefits. We recognise that everyone has different capabilities, and that some have physical disabilities or health problems that potentially restrict their movement.

As an instructor I try to be aware of every participant in a class but I cannot always respond to individual limitations. You however, should know your own body, and I expect you to pay attention to what your body is telling you as you perform your tai chi.

In other words, I expect you to evaluate your personal risk and to respond appropriately to limit your risk.

If balance is a challenge, you might reduce the risk of falling by keeping your body upright, lowering your centre of gravity and ensuring that you keep both feet on the floor at all times. [Three point balance = a flat foot and a heel or a toe]

Exercises are often designed to stretch muscles, but those muscles also need to contract after the stretch. Ensure that you relax momentarily between exercises in Shibashi, etc., and that you remain as relaxed as possible during the tai chi set.

Finally, tai chi should not cause pain. If you find a movement painful you should modify the movement so that you keep the same pacing as the rest of the group while minimising the pain. For example, you might avoid raising one or both arms too high if you have a shoulder problem. It may look different, but if you keep the pacing consistent you won't distract the rest of the class and your body will appreciate the care.

Tai chi should be relaxing, not a painful experience.