



Tai Chi and the summer break

Exercise is only useful if you do it, any exercise is better than no exercise, and regular exercise is best of all. And exercise is just as important during the heat of summer as it is in the rest of the year!

Exercising for a few minutes each day is the ideal, and most of us get at least some exercise walking around the house or shops, bending down and lifting as we work, etc. But tai chi encourages us to work the whole body and involve our mind as well.

Start with some stretches. These can often be done standing, sitting down or even lying flat on the floor. Work your way through all parts of the body, ensuring that you work both sides evenly, letting muscle groups stretch and relax, stretch and relax.

Doing a full tai chi set is often difficult, especially if you are a relative novice. Shibashi is a good alternative and doesn't need a lot of room to perform. The sets that we do in class flow from routine to routine but they can actually be done individually or in any order, and be repeated as few or as many times as you like.

Shibashi routines such as 'play guitar', 'lady weaves cloth', etc., and 'tai chi walking' with turns, will help improve your form as well as assisting balance.

Keep your breathing even: holding your breath causes you to stiffen up and doesn't allow the muscles to either stretch or relax properly.

The ideal form for most exercises is an upright posture. Look straight ahead, rather than down at the floor, and avoid hunching your shoulders.

And whatever you do, avoid getting dehydrated, and enjoy developing your personal set of exercise routines during the break.

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