

The Power of Patience

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S.



Patience is defined as the capacity to stay calm when dealing with a difficult or aggravating situation, task or person.

Having patience provides the ability to cope and endure with an occurrence that would otherwise lead to anger, annoyance or upset. Working toward developing this ability is a process that yields great healing and power. It provides a method for keeping the peace through steadfast boundary setting within oneself and with others. The cultivation of patience has been an integral aspect of the Chinese exercise art of tai chi for 3,000 years. Its martial arts beginning trained individuals to be patient and wait for the exact time to react to an opponent in a centered and calm manner.

Today, those seeking meditative and mindfulness benefits are afforded the opportunity to embrace patience through learning the graceful, flowing and balanced movements of tai chi. The slow nature of its choreography presents a student with the first of many challenges in achieving patience. This is particularly true due to the fast pace of American society, along with the inherent stress of daily life and pressure to achieve immediate gratification. Learning to move slowly and be present in the moment eventually becomes a tai

chi practitioner's normal state of being – blossoming into a lifelong spiritual practice for maintaining balance and harmony. Where patience is embraced on a moment to moment basis without even thinking about it.

The power of patience learned through tai chi brings about a deep sense of freedom and energetic flow. This stems from the release of blockages that have accumulated within the body as a result of excessive frustration and anger. Once flow of qi (vital energy) has been restored, an overall sense of well-being takes hold. As such, a practitioner develops greater awareness and trust in the existence of

their qi. Experiencing the effortless and rhythmical movements of tai chi reinforces their knowing that “going with the flow” is the best approach daily life.

Development of mind intent plays a major role in the cultivation of patience as it empowers a practitioner to use the mind to decipher the appropriate time for action. This begins while figuring out when and how to sustain physical stability and energetic integrity while moving from one move to the next. It requires a strong sense and respect for limitations in one's ability, combined with willingness to release the need for instant results. This forms a sound basis for the cultivation of patience joined with a strong body-mind. The first sign this is happening is experiencing a general sense of inner calm while seeing things more clearly without distraction.

Great value is gained from allowing development to happen naturally and in its own time. Conversely, pushing to make things happen prematurely impedes the full emergence of physical and energetic power. This is based on the tai chi saying: “Qi behaves like water, it can't be pushed – but it can be led”. Whereby, pushing causes qi to become flooded within the energetic system - leading to imbalance and unpleasant symptoms. Yet qi that is guided and led with gentle care and mindfulness flows freely and produces vibrant health and wellness.

Tai chi performed in this manner opens the door to facing oneself. It becomes an experience that provides the necessary time and space to become completely present with oneself. This empowers an individual to listen carefully to what is going on within their heart and mind - allowing them to hear the totality of their feelings and thoughts. It creates the ultimate circumstance for connecting with their inner wisdom, taking deep breaths and being in touch with the beating of their heart. These profound results are gained through greater integration and communication with the physical, energetic, emotional and spiritual aspects of oneself.

Dedicated tai chi practice strengthens intuition and psychic ability which enlightens a person to the deep importance of remaining patient in the face of adversity. Such intuitive capacity empowers a person to instinctively know when, where and how to respond. This forms the basis for healthy relationship building and healing of oneself. In addition, ability to be patient is a key attribute that leads to mastering the flow of qi within the body. This strengthens the energetics of the kidneys resulting in increased willpower and ability to prevent flying off the handle, which saves wear and tear on the adrenal glands through reducing stress and minimizing the fight or flight response.

The power of patience embellishes a tai chi practitioner's life and their form with great presence. It allows for the emergence of a precise and graceful physical form and sets the stage for spiritual energies to blossom. And it fosters deep respect, honor and kindness for self and others resulting in a gentle, powerful and patient existence. It is no wonder that tai chi is known as the “grand way of life as taught through movement” and based on a philosophy that emphasizes maintaining balance in all things.

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