

Discover the ancient art of tai chi -- with your friends at St. Ann's!

Dates: 8 Tuesday evenings (June 15, 22, 29 and July 6, 13, 27, Aug 3, 10)

Time: 7:00pm

Location: St. Ann's Episcopal Church (Parish Hall)

Instructor: Bill Braun (815-728-7352)

Cost: \$30 for the series. (Try the first two sessions, free, then pay \$30 for the series.)

Tai chi uses gentle flowing movements to reduce the stress of today's busy lifestyles and improve health.

If you're looking for another way to reduce stress, consider tai chi (TIE-chee). Tai chi is sometimes described as "meditation in motion" because it promotes serenity through gentle movements — connecting the mind and body. Originally developed in ancient China for self-defense, tai chi evolved into a graceful form of exercise that's now used for stress reduction and to help with a variety of other health conditions.

Understanding tai chi -- Tai chi, also called tai chi chuan, is a noncompetitive, self-paced system of gentle physical exercise and stretching. To do tai chi, you perform a series of postures or movements in a slow, graceful manner. Each posture flows into the next without pause, ensuring that your body is in constant motion.

Who can do tai chi - Most forms are gentle and suitable for everyone. So you can practice tai chi regardless of your age or physical ability — tai chi emphasizes technique over strength. In fact, because tai chi is low impact, it may be especially suitable if you're an older adult who otherwise may not exercise. You may also find tai chi appealing because it's inexpensive, requires no special equipment and can be done indoors or out, either alone or in a group.

Why give tai chi a try -- Like other complementary and alternative practices that bring mind and body together, tai chi can help reduce stress. During tai chi, you focus on movement and breathing. This combination creates a state of relaxation and calm. Stress, anxiety and tension should melt away as you focus on the present, and the effects may last well after you stop your tai chi session. Tai chi also might help your overall health, although it's not a substitute for traditional medical care.

Getting started with tai chi -- Wondering how to get started in tai chi? Even though you can rent or buy videos or books about tai chi, consider seeking guidance from a qualified tai chi instructor to gain the full benefits and learn proper techniques. A tai chi instructor may also be able to teach you about the philosophy underlying this relaxation technique.

A tai chi instructor can teach you specific positions and how to regulate your breathing. An instructor also can teach you how to practice tai chi safely, especially if you have injuries, chronic conditions, or balance or coordination problems. Although tai chi is slow and gentle, with virtually no negative side effects, it's possible to get injured if you don't know how to do tai chi properly. It's possible you could strain your muscles or overdo it when first learning, or you could aggravate an existing condition. And if you have balance problems, you could possibly fall during tai chi.