



High School Students Respond – December 2022

by Amy Tyksinski

(All reflections have been shared with permission from the students)

- What has T'ai Chi Chih taught you about yourself and/or life?
- Choose one principle (or more if you'd like!) and reflect how learning about that principle through T'ai Chi Chih has found expression in your life

This class has taught me about self-love. It's odd and never explicitly clear to me why, but I find much of my vehement dislike or dissatisfaction for myself dissolves when I practice T'ai Chi Chih. I am kinder to myself – patient and understanding of my body; the weight it carries lifts from me and I feel whole, unburdened (or, at the very least, untroubled by my burdens). T'ai Chi Chih is a practice which does not require harsh critique to improve in. I suppose that's why I feel safe when doing it; the risk of failure becomes trivial and the auspiciousness of the day becomes softly prevalent.

~ Oxen Mulkey (High School Senior)

When I started this class, I didn't really think much of it and thought it would be something I just did rather than really experience. It was a lot different though and I'm really grateful I took it. The best way to describe it for me is an inviting nice-sort-of mix of rehab and therapy. Before class I would always feel drained and not want to go, but after, I was just grateful for life and "Zen." This has been really helpful for me as it's a way to relax and decompress and really feel like myself. I didn't expect myself to like it at all. I was more of a weight-lifting guy who was just content with everything, but now I just have a different outlook that I can't really describe.

~ Will Miller (High school Senior)

This class has brightened my life quite a bit. I had always been stressed, pessimistic, overwhelmed and hurt. I always bit off more than I could chew, and refused help and/or guidance. I was struggling all alone. But now, after reflecting and being calm during T'ai Chi Chih, I have tuned into my inner self. I have learned what's best for me, and have become a better version of myself. I know what's good for me, and I have begun to take my life in the direction that I want it. I'm better now than I've ever been. I'm more optimistic, and open-minded. My view in the world is nicer, and more loving. I have noticed a big change in my life since I started learning T'ai Chi Chih.

~ Anonymous (High school Sophomore)

The Effort of No Effort:

This year I noticed that I always think I have to do everything to the fullest. I'll write a 2000 word essay for a prompt that hardly needs 800 words to be explained. I don't really allow myself to relax and use a bit less effort. Learning about the "Effort of No Effort" has allowed me to sort of take a rest from burning myself out and breathe and be satisfied with myself and my work even if I didn't work myself to death creating it.

~ Alex Raskin (High school Sophomore)

Polarity and the Yinning & Yanging of the Legs:

With Polarity, I felt myself connected to the world. I have always felt distant or non-existent, but through the energy I feel between my hands, I feel alive and present. Yin Yang has always been seen as the balance between life. If you cannot find balance, you will not be able to be happy or find rest. In the weight shift of the feet, if you cannot find the perfect balance, you fall. Finding the right balance is different for all. With the right balance in yourself, you find peace.

~ Dat Le (High School Sophomore)

This class has taught me to take things slower and really listen to what's going on around me, especially in nature. To not only listen, but to hear and follow (if I want to). I was actually really surprised about the aspect of "if this doesn't apply to you in this moment, you don't have to go with it, just go with what applies to you in the moment." I think that's helped me in a lot of other aspects. I learned a lot about myself through T'ai Chi Chih and I think that for this semester especially, this class was really good for me.

~ S.W (High School Senior)

(Author's note: In working with young people, I have found it is especially important to include explicit opportunities for them to learn to trust themselves in relation to the teachings being offered in any given moment. When it comes to talking about the spiritual aspects of T'ai Chi Chih, I don't hold back, as these moments seem to happen spontaneously; after almost 30 years of teaching T'ai Chi Chih I'm coming to trust what wants to be shared, almost as if it is being pulled through me. I feel there is a part of each student who is listening and receiving exactly what they need to in each given moment, and even, perhaps, calling it forth, as fundamentally we are together in a multi-directional teaching and learning exchange. I learn tremendously from my students and consider each of them a great blessing. However, and importantly, I make it very clear that each student is free and in charge of what they hold on to and what they can let go of. We call them "Flowing River Moments." Students are invited to view our philosophical and spiritual conversations as a river and let anything "flow right on by" if they don't like it or don't agree or are not into it. I give them a little heads-up just prior to when I might start to share: "This is a Flowing River moment – remember you are free to take what you like and leave the rest!")