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Taijiquan (Tai Chi Chuan)

Six years ago, at the age of fourteen, I started receiving extreme pain in my knees. Since the age of five, I studied Tae Kwon Do, a Korean form of martial arts that is based on leg-work. When I was fourteen, I began training with my high school's track team. I am not sure if the combination of Tae Kwon Do and track training contributed to or directly caused my knee pain; but as a result, I was forced to stop all training.

I scheduled several doctor appointments at Kaiser Permanente. After being sent from doctor to doctor and undergoing the Kaiser provided physical therapy, I was told that the pain in my knees was caused by several factors. As explained to me, of the three main knee muscles, one was lying dormant as the other two compensated for the lost muscle. In addition, my knee caps were rotating. I was told that I have hyper-mobile knees in which the joints allow for too much movement. Despite the pain, because the physical structures of my knees are normal, I cannot receive corrective surgery. Furthermore, I was never officially diagnosed and did not find an effective pain reliever.

During this time, my friend recommended that I receive acupuncture from her grandmother. Acupuncture proved to be an effective pain reliever although it never has entirely corrected my knee problems. I began receiving acupuncture habitually and at times, received acupressure as well. My first experiences with Traditional Chinese Medicine, acupuncture and acupressure are a reliable source of relief.

Last year, I began to study Qi Gong and regularly performed the 8-minute Fundamental Drill in which the body's channels and meridians are opened and aligned. The combination of practicing the Fundamental Drill and Qi Gong meditations, I learned how to connect my body and mind. In addition, Qi Gong is one of the few forms of exercise that do not strain my knees.

For the last three months, I have studied Tai Chi. Learning and performing simple Tai Chi movements and meditations, I am strengthening my inner body and organs. I have relearned basic activities such as standing. Learning how to stand properly and focus on relaxing tension in my legs, I have improved the endurance of my legs in everyday tasks. Improving my control of mind, I can now focus on aligning my mind and body in relaxation of my leg muscles.

When standing and walking used to strain my knees, the combination of alternative Chinese medicine, Qi Gong, and Tai Chi has led me to improve my body internally and in physical exertion. Now, I can stand in a slightly squatted position without hurting myself. Also, I have increased more control over my leg muscles. In addition, the practice of meditation has helped me create peace of mind and rejuvenate my body.