



Hello, my name is Alexandra Reynolds and I am from Orlando, Florida. I am a senior Biology major at Harvey Mudd College and was taking Tai Chi as part of the Physical Education requirement for graduation. While this class may have started out as a requirement, over the course of the semester, I feel that Tai Chi has helped me become more aware of my health and also provided me with tools for managing stress.

When I was a junior in high school, I tore cartilage in my left knee while playing softball. After surgery and rehabilitation, I thought my knee was fully recovered. However, in Tai Chi I really noticed a difference in strength between my left and right knees that can only be attributed to a lack of complete rehabilitation of my left knee. When I was doing rehabilitation there were times when I did not do the exercises I was supposed to be doing on my own time and I thought that it did not make a difference and, at the time, I couldn't tell any difference in strength between my knees so it didn't seem necessary. But, when I was going through the forms that required all of the weight to be placed on one leg, I really noticed a difference in what each knee could tolerate in terms of weight and the endurance of each leg. This class has shown me how the foolish mistakes I made when I was younger are still affecting me today and has shown me areas I need to make stronger.

Another health issue that I have is that I am overweight and every time I go to the doctor I hear about how I need to lose weight. This is no surprise. However, every time I go to the doctor, other than that I am heavy, I have no other adverse health issues. So, other than for aesthetic reasons, I never really had any motivation for trying to lose weight. But, taking Tai Chi has made me much more in tune with myself and has helped me to realize that I do, in fact need to lose weight. While I may not have high blood pressure or be diabetic yet, I can feel myself getting more and more unhealthy the longer I stay this way and Tai Chi helped me to be aware of how being heavy is actually affecting my health, even if medically there is nothing wrong with me.

In terms of stress management, learning how to visualize energy traveling while breathing in a meditative manner has really helped me with being able to fall asleep. Before senior year, I feel like I did not know the true meaning of being stressed. With the demands of thesis, graduate school applications, and job searching during my first semester of senior year, I was constantly stressed. When I went to sleep I was unable to clear my mind and relax because I kept thinking about all of the things I needed to do. This semester was just as stressful; however, I feel that I slept much better. Every night before I slept I would lie in bed and focus on my breathing. This helped me a lot with clearing my mind and being able to have a restful sleep.

Thanks to Tai Chi I have learned new ways of clearing my mind before sleeping so that I get a good night's rest. Also, it has helped me realize how unhealthy the life I am living is and how immediate a change needs to be made. I plan on continuing Tai Chi after I graduate as a way to exercise and relax. Thank you for teaching me!

Alexandra Reynolds [May-10-2011]