

SLOW MOTION

What connects a small fishing village outside Beijing with a church hall in Rotherham? The answer is that the former was the home of Ho Hsieh Lee, originator of Lee family style T'ai Chi, and the latter is where you'll find a u3a group enjoying this ancient form of exercise on Thursday afternoons.

New members are always welcome and are given extra support by more experienced members and the tutor, Chris Heczko, a qualified T'ai Chi teacher with 16 years' experience. Non-slip, flexible shoes and loose, comfortable clothing are all that's needed.

Every meeting starts with a gentle reminder that T'ai Chi isn't competitive, that each should move only within their capabilities, using a chair for support, or performing movements from a sitting position, for example.



Controlled breathing is key, generally breathing in during upwards and outwards movements and out as limbs, head and trunk return to resting positions. After an initial warm-up, the group is guided through a stream of exercises, everyone's breathing synchronised with slow, smooth, flowing sequences of movement involving different parts of the body.

Concentrating on synchronising breathing and movement directs the mind's focus inwards, suspending external thoughts and encouraging a relaxed state known as mindfulness. This stimulates the release of "feel-good" hormones into the bloodstream, improving mood and self-confidence. Controlled breathing also lowers blood pressure, and accompanying T'ai Chi movements improve balance, flexibility and muscle strength.

Learn the graceful, flowing movements of T'ai Chi in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Non-members can try out a u3a activity free on up to two occasions, before deciding whether to join. **Contact Roger Underwood 07793 975 221**

For all Ru3a activities visit u3asites.org.uk/rotherham