

SPORTS / RECREATION / COMBAT SPORTS

## Grand Champion Jose Figueroa on teaching kids Tai Chi

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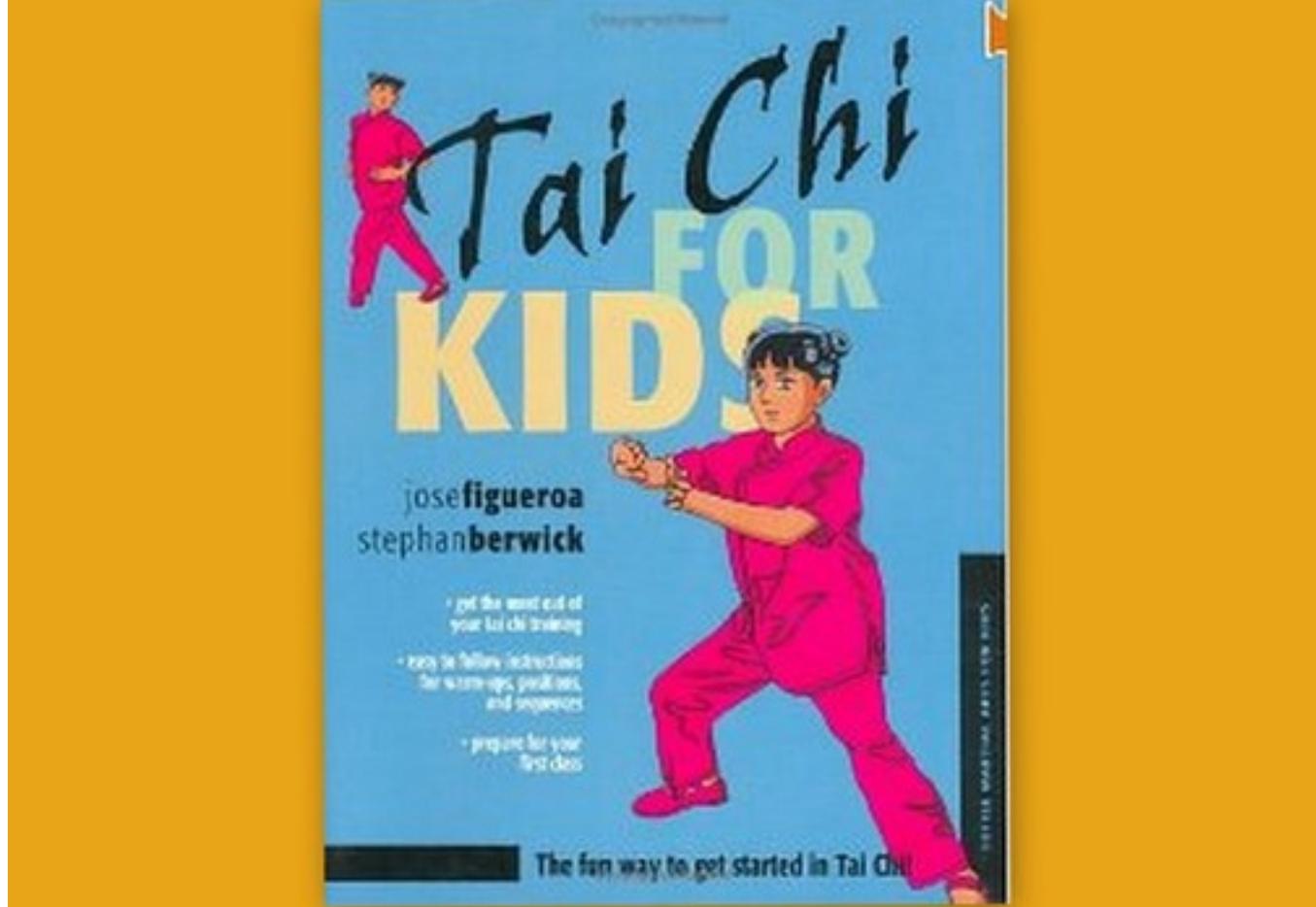
Recently, I wrote an article on childhood obesity and [Tai Chi](#). I received positive feedback as well as questions. There is a consensus that Tai Chi is beneficial for kids in different ways including helping them to control and reduce body weight. The challenge is how to teach kids Tai Chi.



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Master Jose Figueroa working with kids on Tai Chi

*Jose Figueroa*



Jose Figueroa

Master Jose Figueroa has studied Chinese [martial arts](#) for over 20 years (mostly in Tai Chi) and is a disciple of [Master Ren Guangyi](#). He is probably the most decorated American martial artist, winning over 40 gold metals from local, regional, national and international tournaments, as well as Grand Champion at USAWKF International Martial Arts Championships in 1999, 1st Place of Chen Style Forms and Weapons at the United World [Kung Fu/Wushu](#) Championships in 1997, Grand Champion at U.S. Koushu Chinese Martial Arts Championships in 1997, Champion at International Martial Arts and Wushu Championships at Puerto Rico in 1997, Grand Champion at USAWKF International Martial Arts Championships in 1996, and Grand Champion at USWKF Regional State in 1994, 1995 and 1996. He has been inducted into USAWKF Kung Fu Federation / Hall of Fame in 1999, International Kung Fu Federation / Hall of Fame, and World Karate Union /Hall of Fame in 1997.

Master Figueroa has performed numerous demonstrations, lectures and workshops on the Chinese martial arts in many cities (e.g. New York, Philadelphia, Washington D.C.), states (e.g. Florida, California), and countries (e.g. South Africa, China, Holland). He was featured by *Good Morning America*, *Eyewitness News*, *Fox*, *ESPN*, and radio stations. He also acted in the motion picture [Manhattan Chase](#) with Cynthia Rothrock and Loren Avedon.

In 1992, Master Jose founded the Tai Chi Holistic Network utilizing various forms of Chinese Martial Arts to help patients. He has applied Chen Style Tai Chi for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder patients, drug and alcohol dependents, and patients with spinal cord injuries.

After graduating from the City College of New York with a degree in physical education and health, Master Jose has been working with kids since 1992. From 1992 – 1998, he worked with the Board of

Education of New York City. He designed special Tai Chi classes for three different schools in New York City and taught Tai Chi from K-8. Each class had 40 – 50 kids. During his tenure there, he taught about 3,000 kids.

Master Jose has witnessed how Tai Chi helps kids with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and has helped to move them off Ritalin. Some of the kids are from risky neighborhoods; Tai Chi taught them how to deal with or to avoid violence. Tai Chi has also assisted kids take exams more effectively and efficiently.

According to Master Jose, kids like challenges, one example that Chen Style Tai Chi is more complicated which appeals to the kids. His curriculum included standing meditation, silk reeling, a Tai Chi form, and Push Hands. There were different courses for various grade levels. Many kids returned and took higher-level classes. Aside from techniques and form teaching, he emphasized the importance of Wu Der or martial ethics. He also focused on the cultural aspect of martial arts. He taught kids how to see things from different perspectives and to reach a Yin/Yang balance. He thinks it is very important helping kids to find a balance in their life. He utilized Push Hands as a way to illustrate how to deal with a conflict and reach a resolution.

Master Jose does not have a tall build and he speaks softly. It was amazing that kids listened to him. Again, it is how he used Yin and Yang to balance the situation. He collaborated with writer, senior martial artist [Shifu Stephan Berwick](#) and wrote *Tai Chi for Kids* in 2006. Stephan wrote the history of Tai Chi and its principles while Jose talked about his personal experience of teaching Tai Chi to kids. This book is written in a conversational style with information how to structure a class. It is not a recipe book with step-by-step instruction or a set curriculum. However, it is very useful if you want to start a kid's class. Master Figueroa understands that kids can be impatient so he uses games and competition to keep them interested and engaged. There are examples of the games they played in the classes which can inspire you to design your own games.

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## SUGGESTED LINKS

- [Childhood Obesity and Tai Chi](#)
- [Amazing Sarah](#)



**Violet Li**

Tai Chi Examiner

