

Help Autistic children with Tai Chi and Kung Fu

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Working with kids with ASD

Little Dao Dragon

While we are celebrating April as National [Autism](#) Awareness Month, we are overwhelmed by the latest study on the detrimental disease on patients, their families and society.

According to [the National Health Statistics Reports](#) issued on March 20, 2013, the senior research scientist Dr. Stephen J Blumberg and other scientists at the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found out the prevalence of parent-reported Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) among children **aged 6–17 was 2.00% in 2011–2012, a significant increase from 2007's 1.16%**. The Reports further show that the magnitude of the increase was greatest for boys and for adolescents aged 14–17.

In the same month, the Journal of Pediatrics released a new [study](#) by Dr. Frank DeStefano and colleagues from the CDC. They analyzed data from 256 children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD and 752 children without ASD (born from 1994-1999) and found that the risk of autism is not

increased by "too many vaccines too soon". The study result eases the anxiety of millions of parents with newborn babies over whether to have their kids vaccinated. However, the question of what causes ASD is still unanswered.

Even though answers are few, hopes are great. As I previously published, Dr. Louisa Silva's [Qigong massage](#) is medically proven to help Autistic children aged 6 and under. Sifu [Paul Grefte](#) of Holland shared his personal story how [Tai Chi](#) helps him to overcome challenges with AD. I am also now happy to report that Sifu Ford Edwards of [Little Dao Dragon](#) of Hemet, California has been teaching autistic children [Kung Fu](#) and Tai Chi (Taiji) to the point where they were well enough to drop out of medical treatments.

In 2004, Sifu Edwards got a referral to teach Chinese [martial arts](#) to ten autistic kids aged 5 to 9. Before he started working with this group of kids, he sought advice from his Sifu Shaolin Grandmaster and Dr. [Kam Yuen](#), who was the consultant and stunt coordinator for the original television series '[Kung Fu](#)', starring [David Carradine](#). Kam gave Ford some instructions on changing the children's energy field using Chinese Energetics. Ford began teaching the kids Shaolin Kung Fu stances and footwork to work the inner Yin and outer Yang pressure points in their feet, followed up by learning Tan Tui's, which allowed them to work both sides of their bodies. According to Sifu Edwards, working both sides of the body can connect the two hemispheres in the brain. The kids practiced gentle Tai Chi movements to improve their left-right coordination and body control. Other curriculum included Qigong (Chi Kung) breathing, staff form "fire & water", short stick drills, upper body striking drills in the mirror using both left & right hands, arms, elbows, kicks from both legs, shoulder rolls and back falls into foam pads with their eyes closed. He explained that the back falls drill helped to break fear and increase trust in their instincts. He also had them run, tumble, jump, throw and catch balls. He worked with them 3 times per week for 1-hour classes over 15 months. Then they went to Sifu and Dr. [Nadine Shozuya's](#) school after Sifu Edwards relocated his school to another city. He stated that Sifu Nadine was very caring. She donated her time and came to study how Sifu Edwards taught the kids. She continued to teach most of them for 2 to 5 years after Edwards moved. It is very exciting to learn that one of the former students will be getting his 3rd Duan Black Belt.

Sifu Ford recalled that the biggest recoveries of kids took place in the first few months to the point where the kids behaved as any other kids of their age. He did notice when some kids missed a week or two they regressed back to their shell but quickly recovered after a few minutes in class with the other kids. Barbara Soraniono, whose pediatric therapist referred her son to the class, was quoted saying "I'm so happy this class is offered. Already, we see improvement in his motor skills and greater a body and self-confidence."

Sifu Edwards admitted that before working with those kids, he had little knowledge of autism. Since then, he has learned a great deal; looking back, Sifu Edwards thought that many of the students he taught in the 90's classes might have Autistic Spectrum Disorder but were never diagnosed. Today,

there are kids in his class who are diagnosed with autism and some of them exhibit such behaviors but are not diagnosed. Even though he recognizes who they are now, he just teaches them Kung Fu and Tai Chi and they get better. His philosophy requires no labels; each child is unique. It takes tremendous of patience to work with kids with ASD, but for Sifu Edwards, seeing kids progress gives him great satisfaction.

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