



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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FUN, STRESS, AND TEDDY BEARS.

No I have not finally lost it! Just been reminiscing (must have too much time on my hands.

Recently I was fetching something out of the room I have a French day bed in, that is used for my teddy bear collection. It started with my own bear Edward (who has pride of place) I have had him since I was 5 years old and he has now got a few old friends keeping him company!

For some reason I looked across at them and thought teddies always have such a smiley comforting face, you can tell them anything when you are a child and they always keep secrets, always smile at you, and you feel better straight away.

I think they absorb all the positive attitudes to life we have when we are young, plus the energy and the fun and laughter.

Now to the point —Why do many of us lose the fun as we get a bit older (30 is old to some so don't feel judged !!!!) When I occasionally hear that a Tai Chi student in a class has complained that it's too hard or too noisy or people are laughing and joking too much it reminds me of a quote from a Cheng Man Ching book, plus something I read.

“Mount Tai could collapse in front of us and a deer suddenly appear on our right, but our complexion would not

change or even an eye blink” in Cheng Man Ching's Advanced T'ai Chi Form Instructions. Laughter is less than a collapsing mountain surely so find your inner stillness.

I feel this says even more, so I thought I would share it with you. All we seem to do is talk about how much stress we have in our lives, but why doesn't anyone seem to talk about how much FUN they're having?

I've never heard a single person say, “I'm such a mess; I had TOO MUCH fun today”

Of course not, because that's a completely illogical statement.

FUN cancels out stress; it roots us in the moment.

In RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY - A THERAPISTS GUIDE, Albert Ellis wrote *“we disturb ourselves”*

Consider this - We take something relatively easy to cope with and make it into a crisis. e.g. “it's raining, we're going to get really wet, my hair will be a mess, I'll have to have another shower, even though I had one before I came out, and now I will be late cooking dinner, and the dog will have to wait for his walk and he will be running around demented, probably knock one of the kids over, did I replace the plasters in the first aid cabinet, best stop off at the chemist and get some more in case.!!!!!!

Now I'll miss the bus and be even later picking my children up from school, getting to an important meeting, or even heaven forbid, be late arriving at my Tai Chi class !!!!

People come to Tai Chi for many reasons, but over the years I feel it has become clear that when we formed Kai Ming we wanted students to leave their class feeling not just relaxed, but re-energized; calmer and more able to deal with the 'everyday' stresses of life and we have hopefully achieved that.

We wanted the classes to make Tai Chi both FUN and relaxing, so that if you arrive there having had a “bad” day or the journey to class was a little like the scenario above you can, for an hour at least, unwind.

Learning is also improved if you can create an relaxed atmosphere whilst practising with others.

I totally understand that some people may find it hard to concentrate if there is too much hilarity going on, but there is a balance to be struck and we trust our instructors to keep this balance which I know they do.

We are a traditional club and we take Tai Chi seriously but one of the dictionary's definition's of seriously is “solemn, considered manner”. Well we do practice the art in a considered manner, but solemn? I hope not.

We don't want the club to become too solemn or lose the lighter side of the Tai Chi dance.

We need to bring back the fun of learning, the calm after a stormy day can be created from a light atmosphere in your weekly Tai Chi class.

Please let us know what you would like from your classes to make the event more special; we are always looking to improve your experience, which in turn improves ours!

Jenny Peters



My First Year (nearly) of Tai Chi!

by Dr Mike Skander

It was June 1971. I was 19 years old, alone and set free in San Francisco. A few beautiful people still had flowers in their hair but the beauty was slowly starting to fade and things were changing. I had just been chucked out of university, due to political unrest and things which I'd got caught up in but that's for another day.

On that day I took the ferry from San Francisco to Sausalito across the bay. It was mid-morning, very clear and warm, a beautiful stillness sat over the water and a shimmering over the distant sea. As the boat pulled out off the docks, I saw this lone female figure on the end of the quay, facing out to the water, she was Chinese I guessed, late middle aged and slim. She was performing what looked to me like a slow ritual dance, the likes of which I had not seen.....Tai Chi I was told, with a shrug, when I asked. I now know it was Chi Kung she was practicing but I was fascinated and I watched until the figure was too small to see. Her image stays with me to this day.

I returned to university having been pardoned, by the president himself, no less. I made it through medical school and ended up in the UK some years later. I 'dallied' with Tai Chi a fair number of times during my working years but never really got going for a number of reasons.

In 2012, when eventually I retired from full time work, I was moderately handicapped by spinal trouble and had back surgery resulting in losing muscle and sensation in one of my legs. Getting up in the morning to make tea was painful and I walked with a stoop and a limp. I had low energy levels and had gained weight. I was always tired. I slept poorly and ate unhealthily. I was only 60 years old but felt considerably older.

Then by chance, a meeting with one of my previous Tai Chi instructors awakened that 1971 vision from San Francisco.....I wondered..... I was welcomed into a class of mixed abilities, a couple were very good, the rest were beginners of various stages and so on.

It is almost a year now since I joined the classes in Shenstone.

Our instructor Neil is gentle, subtle and patient but a determined and positive teacher. I could barely remember what I

had learned before and was pleased to start from scratch. We spend about 15 minutes warming up followed by Chi Kung, then the Tai Chi form and close with a relaxing Chi Kung exercise. The hour passes too quickly and it's over.

Well, initially it was hard trying to remember the warming up exercises let alone anything else, however, slowly my repertoire increased. I practice every day, or as near to that as I can, sometimes twice a day. I studied a DVD by Mark Peters whom I have yet to meet and I look forward to that.

My instructor suggested a book called 'The Big Book of Tai Chi' by Bruce Frantzis. This is a remarkable book by an equally amazing man. It is not a Tai Chi manual, more a life manual. A better description may be an introduction to this immense and wonderful culture. A must read for any beginner who wants to find a path into this ancient art and way of life. Slowly my eyes are being opened and daily I learn something new, sometimes about myself, sometimes about my mind and body and about this universe we are so lucky to live in.

It is almost a year since I started. So, you may ask why am I writing this now?? Well.....I walk better, my kids are amazed that I stand upright. I only limp slightly at the end of a long day when very tired. My wife says I get out of bed in the morning and can stand up and walk straight away. I have 10 times more stamina and energy. We go for long walks, the sort that I haven't managed for years. I certainly sleep better, my eating habits have changed completely and I have a different outlook on life. My blood pressure and weight have dropped and, by the way, I seldom use pain killers for my back these days. I am a calmer and kinder person. I am less given to getting cross. I consider things and stop to think more. I would dearly like to look into and study traditional Chinese medicine even Taoism. I would like to explore the spiritual aspects of Tai Chi. I know I may never get there but I wish to try and I have a direction.

Some days I feel almost child-like in my anticipation and outlook. It is both strange and rather beautiful, flowing as it does contrary to all I have experienced, learned, taught and been taught hitherto on my journey.

I feel so fortunate to be in the place I am today... the journey continues...Tai Chi... try it.

Annual Tai Chi Camp August 6th & 7th

Hopwood Community Centre
Hopwood. B48 7TL

Every year we like to celebrate Prof. Cheng Man Ching's life and the great art of tai chi he shared with us.

Saturday 6th: will focus on Tai Chi Broadsword (Dao); you will learn the broadsword form and applications. The application of the broadsword will deepen your understanding of your empty-hand tai chi form. No prior experience is necessary. Please let us know, in advance, if you would like a broadsword; wooden swords are £18

Sunday 7th: The day will start with Yang family Chi-kung as taught to Jenny and Mark by Master Liang He Ching. We will then move to advanced form work where you will have the opportunity to review the 'wheres and whys' the Cheng Man Ching form is structured the way it is, professor Cheng's focus on being upright and Sung (relaxed).

The days will run

- 10am to 12.30pm
- Lunch 12.30 to 1.30pm – light lunch provided
- 1.30pm to 4pm

Cost

- The cost per day will be £40 per person (Kai-Ming members) £60 (non-members)
- This includes lunch and refreshments.
- If you have any special dietary needs please bring your own.
- We will provide vegetarian and non-vegetarian options.

Payment options

You can pay £40/£60 per day by cash or cheque to '

Kai Ming Martial Arts Association
and post to
Mark Peters, 3 Middleton Hall road,
Birmingham B30 1AB

Deposits required no later than 30th
June (£10 per person per day)