



Painting the Rainbow Newsletter

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Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

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Balance
COMES
FROM MANY SKILLS.

We hear a lot about how to keep our heart and lungs healthy, how to have a 'balanced diet' but there is little mention of how to keep our balance system healthy. Your balance system includes all the senses in your body that tell you how you are moving and where you are in space, your brain which filters this information giving it values and structure, and the muscles that act to control your movements.

This complex system needs plenty of regular 'practice':

As children we develop good balance by practising balancing activities - walking along walls, jumping, spinning, skipping and climbing.

As adults we tend not to give our balance system the practice it needs. A sedentary lifestyle, health problems, sensory impairment etc can also weaken this system. Even our multi-sensory stimulated world has an impact with focus more on phones and facebook than the real world around. The result is that our balance becomes potentially poorer.

Luckily you don't have to do handstands to keep your system healthy, you just have to pay attention as balance is both

physical and mental, and in fact is an active process not a static thing.

"A man walking is never in balance but always correcting for imbalance."

- Gregory Bateson

Physical – For some reason I keep remembering maths/physics and calculating 'the centre of mass of an irregular shaped body'. I guess you can't get more irregular than human being! Luckily you can put your abacus away because the process is an experiential one whereby you will learn to calibrate sensory feedback. As balance is an activity (verb) the definition could be 'To keep or put something or someone into a steady position so that it does not fall'; this is where my favourite saying comes into play, "the only thing you have to do in tai chi is to learn not to fall over". Or if you prefer – learn to fall into balance not out of it! Due to the nature of gravity, the only way for us to move is to fall so a more accurate term for falls prevention would be alignment with gravity. This is where sensory calibrations comes into play – how do you know you are aligning with gravity?

(1) muscles become sufficiently active to facilitate the movement process demanded

(2) structural alignment changes to correct for misalignment. The subtlety of change required is only honed through fine tuning (calibration) which is the true benefit of tai chi practice.

As you hone your tai chi practice you fine-tune your interplay with gravity.

Mental – Quite the mind to be attentive of the present moment as it unfolds. Tai Chi is a mindful practice whether your focus is martial or health; each posture

and each part of each posture must be practiced attentively to ensure sensory calibration 'stillness in movement'. There is so much noise in the world today be this the attack of another person or the attack of your own extraneous thoughts and actions; stillness and balance is the key. If gravity is the glue that holds the universe together, balance is the key that unlocks its secrets.

Tai Chi a balanced approach – Tai Chi solo forms enable us to hone (calibrate) our balance awareness and this awareness gets its challenge in push-hands where the aim is not to resist but to sense imbalance in ourselves and our partner. Gentle play allows for calibration, active play allows for testing. Push-hands is not about fighting others it's about not fighting yourself, to invest in loss (to eat bitter) and to look to hone further still; this is the wonder of tai chi as your skills can always be sharper.....



3 Pressure Points to Heal Yourself

By Mao Shing Ni

The next time you have a headache, a stuffy nose, or insomnia, don't fret! Try using your own hands to heal yourself with acupressure.

What is acupressure? Let's start with an explanation of acupuncture, the 5000-year-old Chinese medical system that treats patients by inserting needles in the body at certain energy points to produce healing in the body. Acupressure follows the same principles as acupuncture, but you stimulate the energy points with your fingers instead of needles.

In my Traditional Chinese Medicine practice, I have seen many success stories with acupressure. Here is just one example: Recently, the 8-year-old

daughter of one of my patients was suffering from a headache. I simply pressed the Valley of Harmony acupoint between her thumb and index finger, and the headache vanished within five minutes. Acupressure is that simple and accessible.

There are thousands of research articles on acupuncture and acupressure: The overall finding is that these healing techniques encourage self-regulation that leads to health and balance. Research has shown that acupuncture and acupressure exhibit effectiveness in treating a wide variety of conditions, including lower back pain, arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, nausea, addiction, insomnia and diabetes – to name just a few.

Ready to try acupressure on yourself? Try these 3 points!

How to Get Started:

Make sure you have found the exact acupoint. They are only about 0.5 mm in diameter, so be as precise as possible. Use your index finger or a ballpoint pen (with the lid on) to press the point. If you are not feeling any sensation, try different spots close to the area until you feel a slight soreness. Keep your pressure moderate, and be patient: You may need to perform acupressure on the same point a few times a day over the course of several days to feel the results. Acupressure can sometimes be a gradual healing process. For best results, relax and breathe deeply during the acupressure.

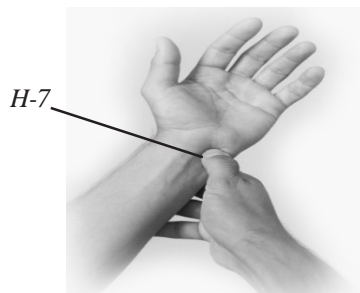
Point 1: Sinus Support

For immediate relief of sinus allergies, use your own fingers to stimulate the acupressure point “Welcome Fragrance” (LI-20) on both sides of your nose, where your nose and cheek meet. Apply moderate pressure with both index fingers, one on each side of the nose. Hold for 3 minutes.



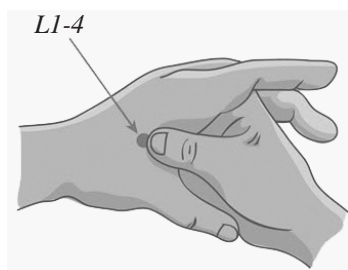
Point 2: Relax and Relieve Insomnia

“Gate of Spirit” (H-7) is the number-one point for emotional issues, especially excessive anxiety and worry. Stimulating this point calms the spirit and helps relieve insomnia. With your left hand palm-side up, find this acupoint at the end of your wrist crease, just below your little finger. Apply moderate pressure with your right thumb, holding for 5 minutes. Then repeat on your other hand.



Point 3: Alleviate Headaches and Pain

Commonly used in acupressure, “Valley of Harmony” (LI-4) is often used to bring relief from pain, and is considered good for the immune system. Mildly stimulating this point can strengthen and revitalize you. This point is helpful for cold and flu, cold hands and feet, constipation, eczema, headaches, menstrual disorders, sinus problems, sore throat, ulcers. Valley of Harmony is found in the center of the web – or the “V” – between your thumb and index finger on both hands. Apply steady pressure with your opposite thumb until you feel a slight soreness, and hold for 2 minutes. Repeat on your other hand.



Do you feel a little more energized? I hope these points serve you well!

*Take risks if you win you will be happy
If you lose you will be wise*

FUN, STRESS, AND TEDDY BEARS.

by Jenny Peters

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,

“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.

Think about it.....