



Painting the Rainbow Newsletter

<http://www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk>

Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel

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Well it's a new year and hopefully another one as successful for PtR as 2014

I saw the collaboration between PtR and BCC ActiveParks in amongst other varied activities the provision of Free Tai Chi classes in many of the parks across Birmingham, therefore bringing one of the aims of the CIC (Community Interest Company) to fruition - making Tai Chi available to everyone and free because of the support from the sponsors. There are now approximately 50 parks taking part of which 20+ have tai chi and there are plans to expand this through 2015.

Many dignitaries from other cities around the country have heard of the success of ActiveParks and asked to visit some of the activities, to see for themselves what takes place. Unfortunately for the ones who attended Mark's class at Cotteridge park they were "forced" or should I say "invited" to take part which they all seemed to enjoy once the ice was broken. Many of our instructors are working flat out most days but really enjoying the lovely comments that the participants of the classes give them and seeing people who otherwise would not be able to get to evening main stream classes improve health wise and get a great feel-good factor mentally.

The winter weather has been good to us so far and not too many sessions have had to be called off. Long may it continue.

We have also been successful in gaining a grant from BVT (Vision grant) to bring tai chi to BVT residents in the daytime for free. The plan is to run a weekly session on Bournville Green starting in February.

Although PTR was initially my concept, Mark and I worked together to bring it into a viable CIC he has had an incredibly busy year because of my vision, co-ordinating all the allocations of instructors to parks, liaising with the Council representatives, attending meetings etc etc whilst still coping with all the other long running COPD and Rehab classes along with the mother club Kaiming with all that entails, and finally his own business. For all the help and advice he has given me to bring my dream for PtR to life I can never thank him enough for making it his dream as well.

I am sure he joins me also in thanking all the instructors and participants in the many classes in parks retirement villages, church halls, community centres, etc who have committed themselves over the last twelve months making the effort to turn up each week to support each other, their instructors, and improve their health and well being which has made PtR so worthwhile.

Jenny Peters – founder of PtR



STAND UP FOR 3 HOURS A DAY
..... but WHY?

Jogging for miles, daily gym workouts, or as the Government advises half an hour a day, five days a week doing moderate exercise (whatever that may mean!) are these really achievable targets for the average person to fit into an already busy routine?

Statistics show that barely 7 % of men and 4 % of women met that advice.

So three cheers for Dr Mike Loosemore, lead consult in exercise medicine at the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Health who feels that the official guidelines on exercise were impractical for many people, and gave an interesting and insightful alternative.

If we cannot, or do not feel able to commit to the guidelines then even small amounts of exercise such as standing, can have significant health benefits. If you keep doing small gains, they'll improve your health. It's easy to do and you make it part of your lifestyle. It doesn't have to be about tracksuits and gyms. It's just about adding a little bit of activity.

Dr Loosemore who was lead medic for the GB boxing team at the London 2012 Olympics says even just standing up is good for you.

When you are standing you are using all the small muscles in the legs and many of the rest of the muscles in the skeleton just keeping yourself upright. If you stood up like this and worked standing up for just three hours a day, five days a week, then that would be the equivalent of running TEN marathons a YEAR!

His main message is small amounts of physical activity may not reach the Government guidelines but are still doing you a lot of good.

Information compiled from Weekend Mail and BBC 4's Today programme.

HOW DO I RELAX?

What does the term “relax” mean in Tai Chi and how can I do it?

放松

Fàng sōng
(Relax)

To relax in Tai Chi is more than just what people commonly think of when they use the word relax. To relax is our natural inheritance, we are born with this ability but many lose this in early life through the need to achieve social acceptance, or the need to be as good or better than others. We often tell ourselves when we have achieved the targets we set ourselves we will then be able to take time for ourselves and relax.

Tai Chi is a different kind of relaxation than sitting on the sofa watching television. It involves the mind, emotions, and body in different ways, and requires a certain degree of reconciliation of inner contradictions, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

To understand this we have to remember that Tai Chi commenced and still is a Martial art (even though practiced by many now as a slow moving healthy exercise) Relaxation is essential for a martial artist to be more flexible and more powerful. When relaxed muscles, joints, and mind become freer and more adaptable. All work together, the whole becomes more than the sum of the parts. The stretching and relaxing occurs vertically, horizontally, and circularly. In the torso there is a pulling upward by the lifting of the top of the head and lifting the back. At the same time, there is a pulling downward at the base of the spine, which creates traction for a healthy and flexible back. When the arm is extended, it stretches outward, but by lowering the elbow and the shoulders, there is a counter stretch.

This stretching opens up the body, improves circulation, and thereby helps generate more energy. These same functions, apply for other uses of Tai Chi Chuan for health, fitness, and self-

cultivation. A good way to get the idea of the kind of relaxation that Tai Chi Chuan uses is to think of the relaxed nature of water. It is soft, changeable, and also powerful. Its power is derived in part from the way it is contained, for example, by a dam or the banks of a river.

If you can envision a sealed plastic bag filled with water, you can see the fluidity of the water and how it reacts when it is squeezed, trying to move to another location, with force when the force is strong. Yet it is always true to its relaxed nature. As human beings, we are filled with fluids and energy, and as we walk or exercise, we are exerting a certain amount of force on these fluids. Which in turn improves circulation to the cells in our major organs and brain, and helps them to function to their full capability.

If we are tense this cannot happen. Tai Chi practice helps release this tension emotionally and physically. In order to do this, we first have to be aware of the tension and its location. Shoulders? Neck? Back? Chest? The physical points. But then the physical tension may be triggered by the mental stress of the day and in some cases is long standing or as we say chronic.

You can stand (or sit) before you start your practice of the Tai Chi exercises and find these points of tension in your body. Work from the top of your head down. If you find one, maybe in your shoulders, keep your mind focused there for a minute or two, breathe in, then breathe out and feel release. Don't force it, as trying to make yourself relax can be an extension of your tension, force against force. It may take time and patience if these are long standing tensions, but eventually you will find there is a disconnection between the tension and whatever was going on in your mind to cause the tension.

You can work through your whole body in this way.

We all need to re-gain the abilities we were born with, before life took them away.

My young granddaughter will be on the “naughty chair, taking a moment” full of tension and temper one minute and

laughing or deep asleep on the floor the next.

Unlike us she and most children still have the ability to let go and relax naturally. Maybe Tai Chi can lead us back to this wonderful state



*We are born naked, wet, and hungry.
Then things get worse.*

Chinese proverb

I felt the need to defend myself
To keep me safe from harm
But while I'm punching out their lights
I'd like to stay quite calm.

So I'm standing here waving my arms
about
Trying to do this thing called TAI CHI
Though I'm doing my best
I can't keep up with the rest
So what the heck's up with me?

I practice in the morning
And again quite late at night.
But I have to hide inside the garage
out of the neighbors sight.

I've bought the books and video too
Thinking they would help get me
started.
But every time I hit the deck
I can't help feeling down hearted.

My instructor said the breakthroughs
close
It could come to me anyday.
He thinks another £1000 of lessons
And I'll almost certainly be OK...

