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Tai Chi Newsletter

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

<https://www.kaiming.co.uk>



Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel

e-mail us: markpeters@kaiming.co.uk

We're gradually opening park tai chi classes and following guidelines over numbers, distancing, track and trace etc.

Check our website as I keep it updated.

Also see tai chi in the park group:

www.facebook.com/groups/parktaichi

We have managed to open some of our indoor classes, but some halls are not COVID secure or have enough space to safely distance 2-3m per person. We have had to move to or three classes to new venues too. Please check with your instructor.

NHS Track and Trace app.

Please download the NHS app.

www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-covid-19/

We can also generate QR codes for each class so you can check in on arrival. Please check with your instructor for details.



Effort Reaps Reward

Mark and I had recently moved house, and at times, it has been a hard road to travel since we arrived here in December 2011.

There have been times when I think we both thought, what else could go wrong?

When would the necessary people we had to contact to get services installed get their act together? When would we stop getting bills for things we did not owe? Would another ceiling fall down!?

I have to admit Mark puts his "money where his mouth is" known as following your own advice of *tai chi is a self-defence for life*, much better than I do, but even he has succumbed to the odd raised voice on the telephone.

Friends asked, "is it worth it?" what will you eventually gain.

You may wonder where all this rambling is going.

Well, 3 weeks ago we had a greenhouse erected near the house on the site of a small side garden that was overcome with weeds through lack of care, by the elderly lady a widow who had been the previous owner.

The chap assembling it had to clear the patch first, hammer down the earth, lay a thick layer of large gravel, then a single layer of bricks around the edges to stand it on, and then more gravel once erected inside, to form a floor.

The photograph you see with this article is what I saw when I went inside

the greenhouse this week, almost a year later, to pot up some seeds.

It had been a week since I had been in there and to my amazement this plant had, against all odds, appeared standing straight, reaching towards the light and sun.

They must have struggled relentlessly to make their way to the surface, through impacted earth and thick gravel to survive.

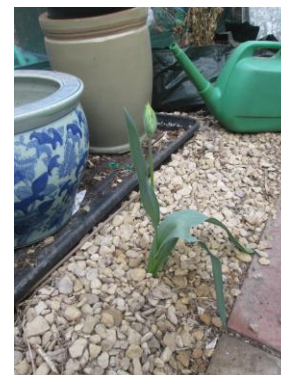
I can now say to my friends "Yes" it was worth it.

We have a home we both feel we have always lived in, and a lovely feeling of this is where we have been travelling to.

I like to imagine those little plants felt the same as soon as the first ray of light and warmth appeared as they broke through.

As the old saying goes, you get out of life what you are prepared to put in to achieve your goal. A fact often ignored these days.

This can apply to Tai Chi also; if you want it badly enough put the effort in and reap the rewards.



At This time this story can apply to all of us, not just a little plant. We have to push forward and we can eventually come out of this darkness called COVID-19.

By Jenny Peters



Learn Tai Chi and Enjoy the Trip

Some years ago, a landmark study was published in an American Journal of the Medical Association that showed Tai Chi Chuan to be twice as effective as other exercises in the prevention of falls among the elderly.

This preventative power was thought to be due to the development of better balance. There is a lot of effort in the form spent standing on one leg and shifting weight slowly and purposefully back and forth from one leg to the other.

There are five elements we believe that are contributing factors in balance, these are: eye-sight, (or vision), the vestibular system (or balance organs) within the ear that send messages to the brain about changes in the position of the head, leg strength, awareness of the body's centre of gravity, and proprioception.

All of these elements are included in Tai Chi practice, in one form or another, but it was found you do not need to have all five working perfectly to improve balance using Tai Chi.

So what was the factor found during the study that was thought to influence improvement the most? It was Proprioception. This is the ability of proprioceptors, special receptor cells found in the joints and tendons, muscles and skin, that process information about the body's orientation as it moves through space. Simply put, proprioception is muscle sense.

Dr Oliver Sacks wrote a book entitled "*The Man who mistook his Wife for a Hat*"; in one essay within the book, he described a patient who had totally lost her sense of proprioception. She had no idea of where her body was. If she closed her eyes, she would fall down.

She was able to move her arms and legs only by vigorous use of her eyes, compensating for her loss.

Even then, she did not "feel" her body.

Maybe this is why Tai Chi can be so effective for balance because it develops this sense of proprioception.

In the 1890's C. S. Sherrington called it our sixth, but hidden or secret sense. Hidden because "that continuous but unconscious sensory flow from the movable parts of our body (muscles, tendons, and joints), by which their position and tone and motion are continually monitored and adjusted, but in a way which is hidden from us because it is automatic and unconscious".

We had a student who was referred to tai chi for peripheral neuropathy. The damage to his nerves meant he had no sensation in his feet, which in turn caused him to fall a great deal. He was referred to help with his relaxation and to hopefully improve his balance. There were two aspects to his problem (1) reduced proprioception (2) the belief that as he could not feel the ground as he thought he should he was anxious about falling. This main seem obvious but have you ever worried about slipping on ice, tensed up when walking and caused yourself to fall? We helped with the relaxation quickly so the next and most interesting part was developing muscle sense (feedback) when the feedback system was damaged. My first question was "are you floating off the ground" to which he replied, "of course not", "so

how do you know?" He thought for a moment and came to the realisation that he sensed it elsewhere in his body so our job was to refine that feedback (proprioception). Within just a few short weeks his confidence grew and his balance improved, in fact his aims shifted from balance to being able to drive his car again and going back to work as a sales rep. Once he had a greater sense of what feedback was through sensory calibration exercises that are an integral part of tai chi – mindful walking, form, push-hands etc. – his tai chi and general well-being improved at an amazing rate, and as this refinement moved from conscious effort to the unconscious automatic process it is designed to be he no longer needed to notice. Tai Chi became is tool for refined practice.

An aspect of falls prevention that seems to be regularly overlooked is that falling (due to gravity) is how we actually are able to move; lean forwards, shift your body weight to start movement and catch yourself by getting your leg there in time. Not getting your leg there in time is called tripping or 'falling over something'. Tai Chi works by stepping out first and sensing the ground before releasing your weight into it rather than releasing your weight and hoping your leg will get there in time to catch you. Both form and push-hands involve moving into balance. Prof Cheng is often quoted as saying, "*We all have an excellent root you just have to stop resisting gravity*". Let's learn to move into better balance, maybe even practice your tai chi form with your eyes closed from time-to-time.

By Mark Peters

To read more about tai chi and falls prevention please visit

www.fallspreventiontraining.co.uk