



Tai Chi Newsletter

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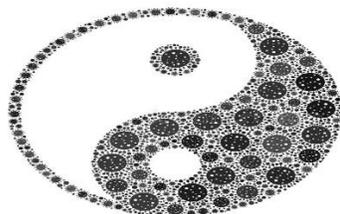
Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel

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A Tai Chi Reset from COVID to Snake Creeps Down (Coming back to Tai Chi - A Group's Reflections !)

So - who am I ?

I am everyone - everyone who has ever taken the Tai Chi journey.

I am the student who began with absolutely no idea what Tai Chi was all about - perhaps people standing still, waving their arms about, trying to look transcendental.

I am the student who began Tai Chi because my friend asked me - and loved it from the start. Family urge me to swap to Pilates or Yoga - but I say No. The slow, measured movements are somehow compelling.

I am the student who had been doing Tai Chi for only a few months before 'lockdown'. In that time I had met new friends I would never have met any other way. Physically, I was much more relaxed and my balance had improved so that I was enjoying putting my socks on while standing up!

I am the student who experienced a number of styles and Instructors as I began my journey. I am the student who has practised Tai Chi for six, ten - even eighteen years. I am the student determined to 'conquer' the Form.

I am everyone - all shapes, sizes and ages, and different levels of ability. Everyone who has medical histories, issues with anxiety, and those with none. Everyone who was moving through our Tai Chi experience, finding our feet quite literally, building on the week before. Everyone who has experienced times when we forgot the sequence, wobbled dangerously on one leg or ended up facing the wrong way. But it didn't matter. We could laugh about it and carry on.

So many people across the world have been, and continue to be, effected by COVID-19, the latest impact being long-COVID where people continue to suffer with symptoms such as:

- extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- shortness of breath
- chest pain or tightness
- problems with memory and concentration ("brain fog")
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- heart palpitations
- dizziness
- joint pain
- depression and anxiety

Tai Chi and Qigong are ideal methods to ease symptoms and aid recover; qigong literally translates as 'breath exercise' and has been shown to have a positive impact on COPD, Cystic fibrosis, ME/CFE, and many other chronic conditions.

We have been able to reopen some [park](#) and [indoor classes](#), and more to come. What follows is a collection of comments from students on their return to class. It is proving to excellent for both physical and mental health. If you have a story to share, please email

markpeters@kaiming.co.uk

We hope these newsletters have kept you up to date, interested and connected in these often isolating times.



I liked routine - I thrived on routine - I felt safe and secure in routine - so I thought !

Then suddenly everything stopped ! March 2020 ! Everything I relied on in my life disappeared. Tai Chi sessions too, once, twice weekly - vanished ! So many different decisions, and nowhere to take them.

'Lockdown' has been a strange time - a time when the highlight of the week became the food delivery from Sainsbury's ! A sudden shock to the system, to the emotions - that got worse as time dragged on. With no classes, the very next week I felt my mind start to fog up. I then realised those slow, deliberate steps were helping me to de-stress.

So - what did I miss? People!

I really missed the classes, much more than I thought possible. I missed the regularity of twice weekly Tai Chi sessions filled with people who say "Hello" and "How are You?" I missed making a fool of myself as I forget a movement, yet again - and it still being OK. I missed the peacefulness of concentration and trying to empty my mind of worries and niggles that come in the door with me and the feeling of love when they gradually fade away. I missed the rhythm that comes as the group move together in the warm up. (Secretly, I enjoy the warm up exercises more than The Form itself most of the time !) And I missed the challenge of trying to get through The Form without errors or mistakes - which still doesn't really happen - one day maybe !

I missed the 'support' of the Group as I struggled to remember. I missed the feeling of confidence that learning with others gives me. I really missed exercising with others - and at the close I so missed the 'Well done, have a good week', and especially the 'See you all next week !' Next week seemed so far away, out of my grasp. O, how I missed my Tai Chi sessions, from 'Carrying the Tiger' to 'Sweeping the Lotus'. No 'tingling of fingers' whilst COVID still lingered. No improving our focus, balance, and breathing. Becoming involved, practising and attending Tai Chi has provided many answers for me during the past three years. My psychological well-being was on its own.

So - what did I do in this Tai Chi 'void' ?

Should I try to go it alone? I started the first lockdown with lots of good intentions of continuing all the various exercise routines I was used to, but found motivation a problem when on my own. I admit that doing it at home was a challenge, A very infrequent occurrence to start with, usually as a response to minor aches and pains. Without support and encouragement, I failed to exercise enough. I tried to keep practising but soon the routine had gone. I thought I would carry on with Tai Chi by viewing the DVD I had purchased, but I am afraid this wasn't so. The only thing I did do more of was eat.

I did do an outdoor class in the Park for a time - when restrictions allowed last summer, but confused myself as some of the moves were slightly different to our style. Alas, even a 'YouTube' backdrop of blue sky, wispy clouds and appropriate music wasn't the same.

Online classes were informative and helped, but 'online' is not the same - although I did try a few.

When I tried, though, I found the result was always positive, even just for ten minutes.

Over time, I discovered that there were other benefits, in being more calm, being more in control of making decisions. Not related to one particular activity - more in feeling that you have a sense of 'what is important' and 'what can wait'. Benefits that came from the warm ups, the loosening exercises - a qigong. Eventually, I ventured into The Form itself. Constantly checking whether I had remembered things the right way or not.

Disjointed - in movement and thought.

..... and then suddenly, it's here - May 2021 !

So - its back to learning and getting there. Back to a regular trip out of the house after months of going nowhere. I actually surprised myself that I remember as much as I do - apparently. One anxiety of 'forgetting everything' overcome !

Back to seeing people again !

Back to experiencing once again the warm friendliness of the others in the group. I think Tai Chi people are generally

positive – they are in our group anyway ! To see people smiling and eager to get back into it (even if they say they've forgotten most of it) is always a great motivator for everyone. There's a sense of purpose in a group. Whatever 'level' people are at, they can feel supported and more confident.

**Coming
back is
amazing !**

I felt quite emotional stepping through the door again once restrictions were eased.

It was good to see familiar faces, It felt like a bit of normality was back, balanced with a reassuring level of precaution. It's good to be back - even though numbers are fewer, spaced out, words like 'social distancing' and 'hand sanitising' still having to enter our thoughts. One day normality will return - one day !

It is great to be back to meet up with old friends on the slow road to what we once all took for granted. Slowly, we are getting back to where we were, correcting the bad habits we have picked up. My hands, legs and feet positions seem to have imagined actions that are not there. It's time to step back - not to 'Ride the Tiger', but to rethink my approach to The Form. It's time to step back and refresh - in other words, to 'reset' my Tai Chi !

I feel a kind of relief - that we are back at last, enjoying having a laugh together whilst doing ourselves some good. Working as a cohesive whole towards the benefit of our own self worth and self-esteem. Always feeling good at the end of the session, and knowing sound sleep will usually follow. Already I feel that my balance is improving. My pain is easing - how can that be in such a short time of return ?!

I've not been on holiday; nor had those socialising weekends with family to switch off, like so many of us this year, but I can feel the effect of switching off and breathing, and ...remember the weight - centre over my feet and shift that body weight left, move feet and shift right..... its having an effect. I love Tai Chi its getting me to relax. I don't have to consciously 'think' like I would with mindfulness, I can just move, or at least try to, and just focus on what I am doing. It's helping me in more ways than I ever thought.

We are together again - mixing our own cocktails of plenty of smiles, Tai Chi exercise, trying to remember 'The Form', and an evening of 100% enjoyment.

So — what words can I use to describe how I feel now that Tai Chi is back in my life ? Relaxed - Energised - Motivated - getting back the 'Balance' of life ! Focus - focus to balance - focus on posture - focus to breathe - focus to be me again !

My little grey cells must have shrunk for I seem to have forgotten many of the sequences I had learned, but I shall rise Phoenix-like from the ashes of my lockdown laziness, and if nothing else, luxuriate in the feelings of total calm and relaxation that accompany me home after my weekly Tai Chi indulgence - Transcendental or not!!

Long may it last !

A compilation of reflections by the combined Lichfield Classes. Heather Lomas - June 2021



Tai Chi and Cognitive Therapy

This is written by someone who has recently suffered from official stress and tension (not just the "oh I'm stressed today" version but the real thing), and related mild depression. I decided that getting to the bottom of the thinking aspects was the only way to get out of the terrible "I can't cope" state you get into in these situations. Mild medication was prescribed but you still have that deep internal screaming that says "But I don't know how to" when people say "just take it easy, and relax". I sought the help of a qualified psychologist.

I learnt that we internalise things, these things build up, our bodies can only take so much – until with this stress addition the stress "jug" overflows. At this stage getting

the jug below full is impossible. The simplest daily thing will throw you back over the top again.

Fight or Flight

If you are actually threatened by a wild animal, by someone attacking you, by any such physical thing then the brain tells the body to release extra adrenalin for Fight or Flight.

Also, if you feel threatened by non physical things (a bad meeting, an interview, a worrying letter, etc) then your brain similarly stimulates the adrenalin - as the brain cannot distinguish between the different types of threat. However, in these situations you can't generally fight or "run" – there is nowhere to "go". You get on a continual adrenalin "high" where everything seems a threat, the adrenalin causes your muscles to overwork and tense, you get fidgety, you get annoyed, you are continually using energy – with no rest time to rebuild your energy levels. The "flight" manifests itself as Avoidance – you avoid meeting people, going out, doing mundane tasks – you have to keep to your comfort zone (which is often your bed).

Adrenalin is a very powerful "drug" coupled with a very powerful brain, the effects of which can have a dramatic effect on your body and how you react to threats. Your confidence goes, you continually think negative thoughts. Basically, you lose the ability to function correctly – you lose control.

So perhaps you're thinking "he's now going to say.....I started doing Tai Chi and all got better". No sorry. I was so tired that even doing Tai Chi exercises was not possible – it was that bad!

The Meeting of the Ways

So what is he trying to tell us. Well, it is what I see as the very close relationship I found between the basic concepts of Tai Chi and those of Cognitive Therapy.

Cognitive Therapy is targeted at relaxing your mind and body (and thinking differently about the various forms of negative thinking). To not anticipate the future, to not look back at the bad times, and to live for this second.

So if we can avoid feeling threatened by an opponent – even the very subtle attack/movement of an opponent in push hands - then we can avoid even the slightest adrenalin

rush, we remain relaxed, and we can remain in control and can calmly deal with the situation.

You must always have a relaxed mind, not just your body. You must learn to take things in your stride and relax through even that tiny feeling of annoyance/adrenalin you get when someone does something you disagree with, argues with you, etc! Remember the statement in Tai Chi which says "Every atom of your body must always be relaxed".

Then there is no opponent, there is no attack.

Relax, Relax, Relax - Mind and Body

The key learning points for me from Cognitive Therapy are as follows:

1. Slow down (wait, absorb, and slowly proceed).
2. Do not anticipate.
3. Live in this second.

To me these match exactly the very basic and the most fundamental of teachings of Tai Chi, if not fully implemented then other aspects of Tai Chi become impossible, and captured in the statement....."**the qi is everywhere in the body, without the slightest obstruction**".

Stress, anxiety and tension are real. They are born from the natural human instinct of Fight or Flight – so be prepared – aim to always have a relaxed mind and body.

(Please note - the writer is not a qualified psychologist but has written this based on personal experiences only).

"Wisely and slow, they stumble that run fast"

- William Shakespeare



Slow down, and wait.....

M.A.D.

I am writing on behalf of the wives and girlfriends of men afflicted by Martial-Arts Addictive Dementia, commonly known as 'M.A.D.'; the symptoms of which can be varied and extremely upsetting to the sufferers carer. They include such things as:

Involuntary movements of the hands and arms, which as the disease progresses can appear at any time and are known by the term 'Blocks'

Similar forceful jerking of the legs has also been observed.

Some of the afflicted have a tendency to utter a loud cry as these movements take place, described by some as a 'WHOOOP'.

There are clubs 'M.A.D.' Sufferers can attend, up to seven days a week depending on the degree of addiction, where they can discuss their disease and try in pairs or groups to coordinate there involuntary movements and use them to their advantage, usually as some simple form of self-defence! They have their own magazines, by which they can keep in touch with their own kind, and spend hour after hour gleaning every small scrap of information from these, that may help them to understand and develop their dementia, that is regarded by the most severely afflicted as an 'Art Form'.



"WHY DON'T YOU GO OUTSIDE AND PRACTICE THAT?"

The words CHEN, YANG, KUNG FU and CHI appear to evoke great excitement when introduced into their conversation.

KARATE, JUDO, AIKIDO, WING CHUN, there are many variations of 'M.A.D.', but TAI CHI CH'UAN with the well-known terribly afflicted sufferer Mark Peters seems the most addictive, with it's slow almost hypnotic movements.

At the present time no treatment is available, and I feel the partners of the addicts need some form of support group, therefore perhaps if the response is great enough, I would be willing to arrange a 24hr. help line to cater for certain times of crises for these people, such as overdoses (weekend camps) and video nasties (Enter the Dragon, Hard to Kill etc.).

As the partners of these men suffer sexual deprivation, because of the 'M.A.D.' addicts constant 'high', I will probably also arrange trips to male strip clubs, and hopefully see the CHIPPENDALES in action.

My in depth knowledge of this disease stems from a close association with a sufferer who I will refer to as Kato (remember the Pink Panther?) Whose greatest joy is to stand poised on the patio, in the moonlight, freezing cold, with a broom handle held majestically aloft (I think this represents a broad sword). The feeling he gets as he stands shuddering with hypothermia is the nearest he will ever get to mingling Chi with the likes of Cynthia Rothrock.

Therefore I hope you will publish my letter and enable me to help other carers realise they are not 'forgotten people'.

By Jenny Peters



How to Please A Monkey!

The keeper said the monkeys were to have one banana in the morning and two at night.

The monkeys were very unhappy with this arrangement.

So the keeper said they could have two bananas in the morning and one at night.

The monkeys were very pleased with this arrangement.

The amount of 'bananas' remained the same; the secret was the adaptation to the likes and dislikes of those concerned.

CHUANG TZU - Wisdom from the East

Jenny read this saying to me because I'm constantly harping-on about NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) and hypnosis in respect to behavioural change; it made me realise it's not about change but about change of perspective. We even had a new student come along to John & Lynne's class in Tamworth and say to me afterwards "I thought there would be more on breathing". Everyone comes with their point of view and our job is not to tell them its wrong but to understand how they have formed it so we can adapt to their expectations and then lead them into a wider understanding of this wondrous art we call tai chi chuan.

It (Tai Chi) is no more difficult than anything else is to learn and its potential benefits are boundless from martial arts self-defence to a sort of self-defence against the stresses and strains of daily life. The skilfulness of a good teacher is found in adaptability; and here is a chance for me to quote an NLP presupposition, "**there are no difficult students just inflexible tutors**".

The next level of adaptability is in push-hands where you learn to blend with your partner and adapt to their push and pull as it were.... I use the term 'constant contact' rather than blend as it feels better to me but that's just words, ultimately what you are looking for (or sensing for) is your partners lack of adaptability to the interplay of push-hands and in turn your adaptability to respond to the opportunity. Hey, if in doubt you could try the banana trade.

Tai Chi Weekend Camp 2nd & 3rd October 2021



Weoley Hill Village Hall, Weoley Hill, Bournville. B29 4AR

Each year we have a focus for the weekend camp and this year's theme is "**Breathing life into your tai chi**"

Saturday 2nd will include tai chi form work in the morning - Breath, intention, and expansion. The afternoon will focus on martial application without effort - sensitivity training, Sung, flow, and root.

Sunday 3rd Will focus on partner work with weapons, to create and control space. In the afternoon you will learn Ba Duan Jin qigong (eight strands of the brocade)

Weather permitting, training will be outdoors.

Cost

The cost per day will be £40 per person (Kai-Ming members)
£60 (non-members)

This includes refreshments. Please provide your own lunch.

Payment options

You can pay £40/£60 per day by cash or cheque to 'Kai Ming Tai Chi' and post to Mark Peters, 3 Middleton Hall road, Birmingham B30 1AB. Or you can pay by card online at <https://bit.ly/3ld0yUw>

Advanced monthly training sessions.

Sessions are held each month for 3 hours at [Weoley Hill Village Hall, Bournville](#), to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi.

Sessions are 9.30-12.30 at £30 per person.

- Sunday 5th September
- Weekend Camp 2nd & 3rd October
- Sunday 21st November