



Tai Chi Newsletter

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

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Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel

call: 0121 251 6172

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Each end of year Jenny & I make donations from Kai Ming & PtR to charities as agreed with the members some years ago.

Although this year has been very different for instructors and students and keeping the “family” together has been hard, it has been even harder for many charities to maintain their usual services as funds have dwindled.

Therefore, we feel it is still something that we should do, and have donated to the ones we have supported from the beginning which are:

SPANNA

BEARS ASIA UK

GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND

SIGHTSAVERS

and 2 New ones for this year

SALVATION ARMY

HAPPYFIELDS KINGS NORTON a small animal rescue local to us that is struggling to feed the animals in its care and to keep going having lost its funding from car boots fetes etc.

All of these charities have sent responses full of gratitude for our donation and for thinking of them at this time.



FREE ZOOM CLASSES TO START 2021

Now most of the UK is in tier 4, we can't even practice outdoors, so I've decided to offer free zoom classes for a couple of months. Each session will have a focus and suitable for all levels.

Sessions will initially be on a Thursday morning at 10.30am and numbers strictly limited. Please email for the zoom login to:

markpeters@kaiming.co.uk

Learn to Relax and Balance

Here is a class plan, from one of our instructors, to help you develop.

Humans are born soft and weak

They die stiff and strong,

The ten thousand plants and trees

Are born soft and tender

And die withered and shrivelled.

When a cat falls it lands softly and so does not get hurt. When toddlers fall over, they may graze themselves but rarely break anything. When drunks fall, they rarely hurt themselves unless they hit something. When adults fall they tend to stiffen out of fear and regularly hurt themselves or fracture bones. Having a soft and supple balance is then one of the aims of Tai Chi.

The aim of the following class plan is to help improve softness by achieving better balance.

Initial exercises: After some initial Loosening exercises the instructor will focus on the simple exercise of moving from the back to the front foot, first right to left then left to right. As the students do this simple exercise, the instructor will move among the class and with their permission point out excessive moves backwards or forwards of knees, bottom, shoulders, arms and hands. The instructor will eventually slow the exercise right down so the students can feel the movement from one foot to the other, in and out of balance.

The instructor will then ask the students to place all their weight down one leg onto one foot with the other foot just touching the ground. Hold this stance for two minutes on each foot. As students feel muscles tense he/she asks them to let their weight

sink starting by untensing (releasing) and dropping the shoulders and then gradually sinking into the rooted foot. The instructor explains that being able to do this without being in tension takes practice but has very real benefits especially in martial applications in relation to kicks and blocks; and, if they are an older class, also in post hip replacement therapy!

The instructor will emphasise that in Tai Chi balance is something dynamic and to remain in balance we have to continue to re-align ourselves in relation to the ground beneath us and the environment around us, as it changes and impinges upon us. So balance is not static but something flowing, nothing truly stands still in this world.

An aside could be made to the students that while this balance is necessary at the physical level in terms of the mechanics of our muscles and the mass of our bodies it is also necessary at the level of our emotions, our psychology, our relationships etc. The instructor might mention that Chinese medicine speaks of this in terms of the balance of the opposite characteristics of Yin and Yang and the resulting healthy flow of Chi/energy throughout the body. Confucius proposed the same relationships between the individual and society, and society and heaven, calling it the "doctrine of the mean" So this sense of balance so important to Tai Chi has, in Chinese thought, moral and physical, individual and social consequences.



The exercises that follow will emphasise the importance of a

straight spine and will centre on the Tan Tien as the central pivot for balanced movements that always align shoulders and hips.

To clarify this the instructor can contrast the straight spine of the army parade ground where the shoulders are pushed unnaturally back and the head is held high almost in tension with the spine with that of Tai chi. In Tai Chi it is as though the head shoulders, spine, waist, thighs, legs and feet are hanging from a thread that runs through them allowing their weight to sink downwards into the ground. Poor alignment of the head and back as in those who have to work with screens all day, or with texts, or sitting at a belt in a factory, leads to tension in the muscles and often misalignment and considerable back pain. A moment's reflection with the class on bad sitting posture and the wrong way to pick up heavy objects will soon clarify the issue.

One exercise to help with this is simple Tai Chi slow walking (mindful walking) from one end of the class to the other concentrating on becoming conscious of where we are placing our weight and gradually shifting our weight from one foot to the other. After a few times practicing this as individuals the class can then be split into pairs with one person gently placing their hand first against one shoulder and then the other and exerting initially light and gradually heavier pressure. The exercise begins to help the student to realise just what has to happen to stay centred and in balance. The image of sand redistributing itself in an hourglass or liquid shifting as though from one leg into another in a 70% / 30% ratio can be used. Again imagining liquid moving from one leg through

the Tan Tien into the other gives a sense of the dynamism of moving into balance for those whose understanding is more image based.

A further simple exercise emphasising this moving into balance and focusing on the spinal and Tan Tien axis would be for each pair of students to face each other and in turn to gently push shoulder and hips in an irregular sequence. The aim of the student pushing is to put the other student out of balance the aim of the one being pushed is to automatically respond by moving into balance with the minimum of movement and of resistance.

The instructor will move among the pairs pointing out misalignment and commending good practice and occasionally demonstrating applications. Although he or she may choose to call the whole class together for a moment to share a particular application with the class rather than just privilege one pair.

Then the class will be led by the instructor in the first section of the form or as much of the form as the class has learned with the emphasis on encouraging them to focus on moving in and out of balance in all the moves. The instructor might lead the form first and then a second or third time call out the moves while observing the students and occasionally asking them to stop in one move and going around to comment on balance.

At the end of this, the instructor can summarise what the class has learnt about the importance of balance and the class concludes with a short slow breathing Chi Kung form.

By David McLoughlin



**Extract from The Nei Jing
The Yellow Emperor's Classics on
internal medicine**

Winter is the ultimate of yin; yin dominates, yang is sleeping. Resist the temptations to be busy. Winter is the time of the year for rest, caution and introspection.

The three months of winter
Are called closing and storing.

Water freezes, earth cracks.

No more influence from the yang.

One goes to bed early;
one gets up late.

Everything must be done according to
the light of the sun,

Exerting the will

As if buried, as if hidden

Taking care only of oneself,

As if fixed on oneself, in possession of
oneself.

One must avoid the cold and seek the
heat.

Not let anything escape through the
layers of skin,

For fear of losing all the qi.

This corresponds with the winter qi.

It is the way that maintains the
storing of life.



Trying to Avoid My Destiny

We are led, aren't we?

Even if we are at the time unaware.

Little did I realise when my husband finally found a fairly local Tai Chi class, that my life was about to change. Not a miraculous transformation. Not immediate enlightenment. But a slow dawning.

My usual defensive excuses about my arthritic knee joints and 'bad back' weren't accepted and I was persuaded to "come along and try for myself". I don't mind telling you it was almost impossible to coax seized up knees to just gently and lightly bounce. But I was made to feel relaxed enough and welcome enough to only do as much as was comfortable - which I have to say was very little to begin with. Since when has exercise been this easy? No goals. No time limits. No competition. Even better, no jarring of joints, no stress and NO PAIN.

I had always thought it was 'no pain, no gain'. Wrong. With Tai Chi I found it was no pain, everything to gain. I began to see that Tai Chi's gentle movements strengthened my leg muscles, taking the strain off my knee joints, therefore allowing greater mobility and flexibility. It also promotes correct posture which removed any strain from my lower back. I have recently been encouraged to hear my osteopath recommending Tai Chi.

I Hope Nobody's Watching!

Perhaps at this point I ought to say how I really felt when my husband and I first joined. Embarrassed - comes to mind. Not so much because I didn't achieve a great deal in the first few weeks, but more so the fact that our

teacher was so genuinely enthusiastic about a series of movements which quite frankly looked ridiculous. They seemed to be so easy and I couldn't imagine how they were going to 'exercise' my body. I was relieved to be in an enclosed hall with no onlookers. How on earth were these small movements going to be of benefit to me? I'd always seen keep-fit enthusiasts putting so much effort into their chosen sporting pursuits and now faced with a young man effortlessly drifting around the room spouting about the health giving properties of Tai Chi, I was hard pushed not to laugh.



I think an apology is long overdue.

Little did I know that I had been led to an all-encompassing holistic art form which has, over the years, gently revealed itself to me to be not just an aerobic, no-impact relaxing discipline, but also a means of balancing the body's physical and mental energies and of becoming a spiritually uplifting even prayerful experience.

Tai Chi Practitioners Do it in The Park!

If I can overcome myself consciousness and join Alan in the park, Tai Chi in the morning or evening underneath the old trees is very rejuvenating. Amusing also when we are joined by the occasional teenager who is determined to try out his very vocal Bruce Lee impersonation. There have been times when we've lost track of time and been locked in the park at

dusk. I can just imagine the local headlines!

We're All Individuals

We're all unique, and as such come to Tai Chi with our own unique reasons and expectations. Some come because it is a Martial Art, others seek relaxation and some like me, hoping to find a gentle form of exercise. But just as we are taught that if you have joined a class for relaxation you will also learn the martial aspects and improve your body's efficiency, and similarly if you have come solely for the martial training you may be surprised to find you're learning how to relax and improve your health as a bonus - I definitely found far more than I ever expected.

Yes, my knees are so much better that people disbelieve that I ever had a problem with them. But there's so much more I don't know where to start. It was a while before I realised that Tai Chi had improved my circulatory system and I no longer suffered leg cramps during the night - something I'd inherited from both parents and experienced since childhood. I now stand naturally with my knees directly above my feet as opposed to being slightly knock-kneed, again an inherited problem which must be why my family are predisposed to arthritic knees. And also linked with this are dropped arches which I now find have disappeared because I automatically bear my weight correctly. My driving is far more laid-back as find I have a calmer and more forgiving nature, not bad for someone renowned for her quick temper. I find half an hour of Tai Chi calms the mind, energises the body and lifts the spirits. Perfect at the end of a stressful day.

I have to come clean and admit that on more than one occasion my commitment has waived. Twice following surgery and also after the death of my very closest friend, Len, I stayed away from classes for many months at a time, but somehow I knew it was OK to begin again. And yes, each time I stopped my knees seized up again and the leg cramps returned. But it's comforting to know that you won't be judged, just welcomed back to class and allowed the space and time to develop.

By Maureen Daniels



Last month we posted a quiz, by Heather Lomas, did you have a go? Here are the answers

Guess the Move! Taken from the Cheng Man Ching 37 Step Form

1. Valuable bird becoming impatient
[Golden Cock stands on Left Leg / Right Leg](#)
2. Audition to join a Rock Band maybe
[Play the Pipa \(Guitar\)](#)
3. Heavy lifting gear in a feathery snowstorm
[White Crane spreads its Wings](#)
4. To get the plot of the story, ornithologically speaking
[Grasp the Sparrow's Tail](#)
5. Fast vehicle needs to get the brush off
[Sweep the Lotus](#)
6. The Pleiades just fit the bill
[Step up to Seven Stars](#)
7. Anagram: wonderful bites
[Fist under Elbow](#)
8. Village crafts instead of sitting in an ivory tower
[Fair Lady weaves Shuttles](#)
9. No speed, no legs, and not in a northerly direction
[Snake creeps down](#)

10. Aeronautical gyrations, but not 'a barrel roll'
[Diagonal Flying](#)
11. Reverse the action for the human race to evolve
[Repulse Monkey](#)
12. Not a pulling action - I say again, not a pulling action
[Double Push](#)
13. Cuddly kitty hitches ride to summit
[Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain](#)
14. Anagram: rain shades
[Raise Hands](#)
15. One lone tree sapling affected by wind from the South West
[Diagonal Single Whip](#)
16. To down tools, but not from the hip
[Shoulder Strike](#)
17. Are you ready - no, are you really sure you are ready ?!
[Preparation](#)
18. Smoke and mirrors - at the end all is not what it appears
[Apparent Close up](#)
19. Reconsider - it would never catch on in the Grand National
[Step back, Ride the Tiger](#)
20. Apart from the letter 'c', what links cirrus, carpus, cumulus and a crustacean?
[Cloud Hands](#)



**Limited quantities of A5 desk
and A4 wall sizes available.**



Every year Jenny and I make a calendar and the proceeds go to charity. If you have not had one before, it has a mix of inspirational quotes and funny thought. Email for details: markpeters@kaiming.co.uk