



## Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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It feels so long since we last attended a group class and felt the interaction and shared energy in the space. With all the discussions around social distancing it made me reflect on the old anxieties that can develop from partner work in tai chi, and in particular pushing-hands which could be considered a two person dance. This seemingly strange activity, to the uninitiated, has many benefits not least of which is overcoming the intimacy of the close contact and spatial awareness training. With this in mind, I thought I'd share an article I asked Don to write.



### **PUSH HANDS A VIEW FROM THE FRONT OF THE CLASS**

Last year, with Ian Jacobs, I was given the responsibility of putting together a short push hands workshop for trainee junior instructors (TJI). I looked back at my own experience of push-hands (PH) to focus on how do you introduce the subject. When I first introduced PH, in my first year as a rookie instructor, to new students I could tell straight away some people did not see the point in it therefore not enjoying it; I felt that was just the way it is. At this time I lost a number of students; I didn't pay much notice because as we know students come and go. It wasn't until I bumped into two students from this class that I was enlightened to why they had dropped out of the beginners class; they hated PUSH HANDS, and for many reasons.

Over the years of introducing PH to new students, my teaching methods have changed and developed. This article will be about one way of introducing this wonder aspect of tai chi to new students, how to make it less scary, less confusing and more enjoyable; the trainee junior instructors will take the role of students new to PH.

The methods used in this article is by no means the only way, but a way of looking at obstacles that may hinder the enjoyment and progression of the subject.

When I was first introduced to PH by Mark (principal instructor), many years ago I found it fascinating, frustrating, annoying, mystical, inspiring and wonderful the way Mark moved me around like I wasn't there; the way I would tense up not understanding why. I vividly remember Mark making me fly through the air, it felt like he hardly touched me but I really took off, it was great. I don't suggest for one moment you ever try this with your students, (even Mark was surprised).

I started the workshop by discussing Ian and my experience in PH; as I was doing this I wandered around the training hall around the TJI's then without any warning, and totally random, stepped right up into the face of a TJI (sorry Sam); his obvious reaction was to be startled with a slightly nervous look on his face it made him feel a bit intimidated.

Going back to what I mentioned earlier about the two beginners, who dropped out of my class, they mentioned their personal space and feeling of awkwardness. With this in mind, when teaching a group of new students PH, let the students gel and get comfortable with each other this can take time; in the case of a new student joining a class, try putting the student with a more

established student who has a more empathetic way.

I now moved onto what you could call 'an ice breaker' using a tool/resource, each TJI was given a deflated balloon to inflate to a given size; the atmosphere in the hall changed and was filled with fun as some balloons whizzed off and were played with.

Ian and I now demonstrated how we wanted the balloons to be used; we placed the balloon between the palm (mine) and back of the hand (Ian) of our extended arm. Ian now led me around the hall before switching over. Now it was the TJI's turn once again much hilarity was displayed; this exercise reinforced trust, with the benefit of fun, without personal contact.

Ian and I now demonstrated, with the aid of the balloon, push-hands 'A' sequence. The TJI's followed and practiced the sequence; another tool/ resource came into play, the humble pencil this was used to stop the forward facing arm of each JTI collapsing towards the chest.

When introducing push hand to new students you can drip feed the exercises as not to overwhelm them.

Going back to the workshop, now the balloon was removed and we moved through push hands A, B & C finally ending up free push hands in fixed step. The class tried push-hands with eyes closed, to improve their sensitivity and awareness.

We discussed some of the elements of push hands and how you can get bogged down with just the hands when you can use all the arm; in-fact I changed the name of PH with one of my classes to "SNEAKY ARMS" to help change this fixation with just the hands.

There are so many benefits of PH training  
- improved balance, deeper relaxation,

improved grounding to name but a few. It up to all instructors to make it fun and help in the transition from Tai Chi form training.

Another bonus is that Men and Women can obtain equal proficiency since size and strength does not matter.

By Don Craig, Chief instructor

## healthy eating

### HEALTHYEATINGTIPS

Its very easy, in this lockdown period, to tuck into comfort foods (and drink) so we thought it would be a good time to share some useful food tips.

**SPINACH** ---Good for the brain, help reduce inflammation and some research shows a correlation between high vegetable intakes and lower rates of dementia.

**GARLIC**---For your gut as it (and artichoke, endive, and chicory) feeds the good bacteria in the gut. Well fed bacteria improves their ability to reduce inflammation and stop bad microbes colonising in the gut.

**BLUEBERRIES**---These are antioxidants that help reduce blood pressure and development of cardiovascular disease. In fact all red and purple foods are excellent for this, berries, beetroot, red cabbage, and grapes red onions. They contain chemicals that help reduce blood pressure.

**WALNUTS**---(If you can have nuts) They are a source of good fats and can positively impact on inflammation, as is oily fish.

**TOMATOES**---A chemical found in tomatoes and exotic fruit like Guava and watermelon, has been shown to inhibit several types of cancer by interfering with cell signals that stop the cell growing. Its always hard to to prove direct effects on cancer outcomes but included in your diet may help protect against it. (if you have arthritis tomatoes may be advised against)

**YOGHURT**---There is evidence of a relationship between the health of our gut and mental health. Including live yoghurt, sauerkraut, kimchi in your diet and other fermented foods is wise.

**BRAZIL NUTS**---Whole grains, beans and nuts are a source of copper which encourages skin rejuvenation and wound repair while brazil nuts contain Vitamin E that can help neutralise the compounds in skin associated with sun damage. The selenium in them is thought to reduce the redness and inflammation associated with acne.

**CARROTS**---Yes, they are good for eyes as they are packed with beta-carotene, a type of plant chemical that is concentrated in the eye and essential for retinal health. You'll find it in pumpkins, red peppers, and sweet potato too..

### BREAKFAST BRAIN FOOD

Combine 125g rolled oats with 60g chia seeds 250ml of milk and a tablespoon of maple syrup. Stir and leave in the fridge overnight. Serve topped with 60ml (four tablespoons) plain yoghurt, ten blueberries and five almonds if no nut allergy. Vary amounts to suit taste. Healthy and tasty.

### Or how about this

Make a mug of Green tea and use it to cook your porridge oats, then sweeten with fresh fruit and sprinkle toasted pumpkin seeds on top.



### The essence of it all

Here is an example of delving too deeply into something instead of looking at what is staring you in the face, or in Tai Chi terms, 'neglecting the near in search of the far'. This was given to us by Mike Gibson who teaches at Monkspath.

Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal and a bottle of wine they lay down for the night, and went to sleep.

Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars."

"What does that tell you?" says Holmes.

Watson pondered for a minute. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter-past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you Holmes?"

Holmes was silent for a minute, then spoke.

"Watson, you idiot. Someone has stolen out tent!!"



Q&A on Tao of Tai Chi Chuan.  
By Master Huang Sheng Shyan

**Question:** How many times must we practice the set movements every day?

**Answer:** The important principle is moderation. The practicing technique must be correct in the first place. Some people say you must practice the whole set of movements ten times a day with one set lasting about 25 minutes. This only focuses on quantity and is wasting Chi and energy. It is contrary to the basic principles of Tai Chi succeeding in only making you sweat and reducing weight. It is not beneficial to the development of the internal force, internal organs or generally the body internally. Grandmaster Cheng Man Ching has said, "I practice the mobilization of the internal force and chi using the 37 basic movements every day. One set of movement lasts only 7 minutes". Practicing too much or too little is subject to whether it is practiced correctly or not. Utilizing my experience and following my practicing technique, students are encouraged to practice every morning and evening using about 5 minutes to

practice a particular movement or posture (dividing each of them into 2 parts) over and over again. Those students who do so are likely to succeed.

The key to correct practice is the question 'for what purpose' for purpose gives intention. Sometimes you might practice 1 movement and apply what you are learning from the loosening exercises, another time you might practice 1 movement and focus on the transition to the next. I remember a sign my old boss had at work (engineering company) which read "we never have time to do it right but always have to find time to put it right". Or even the old adage "right first time". You should always practice with diligent attention otherwise, it is just a waste and an empty dance no matter how graceful it may seem. Tai Chi is and should be enjoyable, diligent practice every day will always add to that enjoyment.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**Please send your Newsletter contributions for future issues to [markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:markpeters@kaiming.co.uk)**

***Beginners corner***



**What's in a name? - 'Qigong'**

In the last newsletter, issue no.142, we discussed the translation of Taijiquan, in this newsletter we will research the meaning of Qigong, another term you may hear in your classes.

Again we have two translation systems Pinyin - Qigong (modern) and Wade Giles - Chi Kung (older). I will stay with Pinyin for this article.

Qigong which is pronounced "chee-gung" translates as follows: Qi - life energy or vital force, gong - to cultivate or work hard. This is sometimes referred to as 'breath work', the reason for this is that the mind/breath can guide the Qi around the body. "Yi Dao Qi Dao", where awareness goes energy flows.

So, what is Qi? The Chinese believe that it is the spark in every cell of your body but also every other living thing, as well as inanimate objects. If you think Quantum Physics you will get the idea. Chinese traditional medicine (TCM) believes there are four types of Qi in the body, the Qi you inherit from your parents, the air you breathe the food you ingest and defensive Qi your immune system. You can't change the first one but by exercising (Qigong and Taijiquan) and eating healthily you can improve your health and strengthen your immunity.

The history of Qigong goes back, some say, as far as 5000 years or more. Qigong, as a physical health practice, is a mix of the ancient Chinese meditative practice xing qi (circulating qi) and physical exercise daoyin (guiding and pulling). It can be traced back to 168bc, where scrolls found depicted people stretching, breathing deeply and imitating animal movements of monkeys, dragons, bears, cranes and tigers. Some of the first written records are from The Yellow Emperors classic of internal medicine from the 26th century BC. There are many forms of Qigong - some estimate over 7000. Many are from Buddhism and Daoism principles as primary ways to move the body, regulate the breath, calm the heart/mind and possible lead to spiritual awakening if you so wish. Therefore Qigong can be medicinal, martial or spiritual.

There is also another form of Qi training called Neidan (Inner Alchemy) which is more of a internal meditative practice where the mind moves the Qi (energy) around the body. This is similar to some Hindu yogic practices where, in Sanskrit, Prana is the life force.

A mention should be made of the legendary figure Bodhidharma (Da Mo in Chinese) from around 520 AD who allegedly was the son of an Indian nobleman and had trained in warfare but later travelled the Silk Road to China to spread the word of Zen Buddhism. After offending the Emperor who was also a Buddhist (he thought the Emperor was arrogant and pompous), he sought refuge at the Shaolin monastery, and stayed for nine years, repaying their hospitality by teaching them exercises from his military studies which included yoga type exercises which later became Qigong and Kung Fu. He is thought to have been the creator of the Qigong set Yi Jin Jing the muscle tendon changing classic. Although the Shaolin temple had monks, and had been in existence for twenty years or more before he arrived, he is referred to as the 'Original Shaolin Monk' due to the influence he had on the future of the Shaolin system.

Now you may, or may not, believe in Qi but the exercises certainly work the body, mind and breath and if you think how Yoda and Luke Skywalker used "the force" in Star Wars, the possibilities could be endless.

"May the Qi be With You".

Neil Rankine - Senior Instructor

*Standing misty  
as a mountain  
behind a foggy  
dawn,  
pausing  
surrounded  
by the still air  
heard my breath  
move as a windsong  
felt my heart whisper  
as a river flowing  
watched my mind  
settle the doubts  
of existence  
as the fog fades  
clearly standing  
still....*