



# 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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### Touching lives through Tai Chi

I'd like to open this month newsletter with a letter from Karen Hurney who is a student of Steve Taylor from his Selly Oak Class. She posted this to us a few weeks ago. It shows just how our classes impact peoples lives far deeper than just practicing the form each week.

Dear Mark & Jenny, thank you for setting up "Painting the Rainbow". I have attended a class since July 2017 and enjoyed it very much.

Jenny, thank you for sharing your poem entitled "Leopard Skin Prozac" – it made me smile. I find stroking a pet, wearing a particular handbag or piece of jewelry usually does it for me.

With that in mind, I recently bought two Chinese calligraphy birthstone pendants from a catalogue entitled "Bits and Pieces". I was really pleased with them and thought you and your colleagues/students may be interested in them. The website is [bitsandpiecesuk.co.uk](http://bitsandpiecesuk.co.uk)



### What the Hell is this Chi Business, Anyway?

Let's face it: most of us will have heard some variation of that question, possibly followed by an assumption that we believe in it. Because that is what Tai Chi is, right? You have to believe in all that unscientific energy and meridian stuff. That silly Daoist nonsense. How very pagan.

I've tried three different forms of Tai Chi, under a number of instructors, whose beliefs have ranged from total "chi-hugging", to a complete rationalist denial of the existence of chi. One thing seems certain to me: you really don't have to believe in chi, meridians, or any aspect of traditional Chinese medicine, to practise Tai Chi, or to be good at it.

Johann Sebastian Bach was deeply religious, and his faith informed most of, if not all of, his musical output, yet rendition, interpretation, or appreciation of his music is not limited to those of religious faith. You will not mess up The Well-Tempered Clavier because you are an atheist. You will make a complete dog's dinner of it if you are a crap pianist. Likewise, you will not have a shaky Single Whip because you are unable to, or refuse to, feel the "chi"; you will be unbalanced and unstable if you do not follow the cues your body gives you.

In the 16th century, when the original Chen style was being developed, and medical knowledge was extremely limited by today's standards, sensations encountered during exercise routines, such as warmth in limb extremities, slight buzzing sensations, or pleasant tingling, will have been best explained using concepts common in prevailing folk medicine, philosophy and religion. Terms involving mystical energies flowing along body pathways. These explanations worked well. So well in fact, that they have lasted the course, and are still used today.

I have seen the illustrious national treasure that is Stephen Fry scoff at the idea of the word "energy" being used in anything other than the strict scientific sense. And he may well choose to use his extensive education and knowledge to

poke fun at the idea of chi and similar concepts. He was, however, unarguably overweight and unfit when I saw him make these comments. Thanks to Tai Chi, I no longer am either of these things. And I do not even believe in chi. It might even be remotely possible that Stephen Fry does not know everything. Imagine that, if you can stomach the blasphemy.

I do not think it really matters whether you believe in chi or not – what matters is what effect Tai Chi has on your physical and mental state. If thinking of it in terms of chi gets you through the night, it is all right. If it does not, and like me, you like to think of it as mechanical and chemical processes in the body that is fine too. I can tell you with absolute conviction that if you stick with it, work at it, and are patient with it, you will be a better, fitter, and calmer person. In addition, given time and money, I am sure I could prove scientifically that this is the most likely outcome. I could also probably beat Stephen Fry in a fight.

You do not have to believe in chi to be good at Tai Chi, but it helps. Possibly...



*Are You Feeling Anxious and Stressed?*  
Qigong can help alleviate the symptoms

A recent study reported in the International Journal of Stress Management (May 2008), indicated that the practice of Qigong (Breath Exercise) can lead to a significant reduction in psychological stress levels including anxiety and associated depression.

Although anxiety is a normal reaction to a potentially threatening everyday life situation, in some people it can become chronic and so frequent and intense that medical treatment may become necessary. At the very least, anxiety is likely to reduce your quality of life and is likely you have an adverse impact on your relationships, home, leisure, and work environments.

Symptoms of anxiety can include excessive fear, heart palpitations, restlessness, insomnia, shortness of breath, sweating, and chest discomfort.

Current Western medical treatments for anxiety often include the use of drugs with their accompanied side effects. There is, however, a more holistic and life-affirming way of alleviating anxiety and Qigong is a natural treatment for anxiety and its associated symptoms.

### The recent study

The recently reported study took 59 regular Qigong practitioners and compared their levels of stress and anxiety with a similarly sized control group over a period of time. Pre and post stress indicators were then measured and compared. Results showed that levels of stress, depression, and fatigue were significantly lower in the group of Qigong practitioners. Results therefore suggested that Qigong exercises could produce desirable effects.

Several other studies support the use of Qigong to treat anxiety. As an example, a 2007 study reported in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine suggested that Qigong has a positive medical benefit on individuals with generalized anxiety disorders. Further studies have indicated that helping alleviate Qi imbalances reduces anxiety and has a significant effect on the hormones related to stress

### What is Qigong?

Very simply put, Qi can be considered as the life force or life essence that can be cultivated in the body for improving physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. The word 'Gong' means work, skill, activity or practise, and training in a set of techniques, so roughly translated

Qigong means 'working with life force', or 'cultivating vitality'. Tai Chi can also be considered a form of Qigong.

Because the practice of Qigong involves slow relaxing movement, often coordinated with the breathing, it helps calm the mind, restore mental balance, decreasing the body's stress hormones, and bringing you more in harmony with the surrounding environment.

The movements of Qigong help the circulating Qi or life force around the body, helping dissolve mental and physical blockages to the flow of energy and relieving anxiety, depression, and fatigue. Over time, regular Qigong practice will help you improve other aspects of your life.

### What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a general feeling of being worried. Everyone occasionally experiences anxiety, however, people with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) feel anxious frequently or excessively, even when the factors that originally caused the anxiety have been removed. This can lead to an existential anxiety, or an all-pervading anxiety affecting much of your life.

Symptoms of anxiety and panic can vary from person to person, but can include:

- Tense muscles
- Shaking or trembling
- Nausea or churning stomach
- Diarrhoea
- Fast heartbeat (tachycardia)
- Fast or troubled breathing (dyspnoea)
- Dizziness or impaired concentration
- Palpitations
- Headache
- Sweating
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Sleep disturbances

### Where can I practice Qigong?

Qigong is very flexible and usually easier to practice at home so you could buy a DVD or better still attend a workshop or ask your teacher, as they will/do include it in your regular class. Tai Chi itself is a form of qigong; you just need to give more focus to the breath.

### Quote

*"Every forest branch moves differently in the breeze but as they sway they connect at the root"*

*Rumi-Brdions*



### Let's Not Tell Mommy!

**For Daisy & Lilly**

*My rays of light that conquer life's bad days*

Sometimes I have fears that I may cease to be  
Before a grandchild has sat upon my knee  
Before there are memories they can hold dear  
Before they understand my greatest fear

And now they are here and at last I know,  
You may lose your children as they grow.  
I listen and watch them and see the roles change place  
I look in the mirror and see MY mother's face.  
Now the grandchildren are another story  
Nana and Granddad take all the glory  
You become the ones when parents have gone  
To let them have another sweetie and say  
"let's not tell mom"  
You can dance and be silly as much as you like  
Go on their rocking horse, tractor or bike  
Run round the garden and pretend to be shot  
Act like a child again and not give a jot  
Pick strawberries together and eat them all  
Then they hold MY hand as I walk on top of the garden wall!  
Pull funny faces act like a fool  
Parents may not like it, but the kids think your COOL  
And when you stand at the door and turn to go  
A little voice whispers "Nanny & Pops I love you so"

By Jenny Peters