



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

call: 07831 743737

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

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



Who Knows Where a Journey Can Lead

Let me start with the comment when I set out on my journey “Teaching Tai Chi was NOT what I wanted to do”. It was just a hobby that I enjoyed and felt better for doing.

I just couldn’t understand why people wanted to take on the responsibility of teaching. Why not just enjoy being a student.

I thought they must get something from it, but what I just couldn’t see.

Then one evening the teacher needed someone to help out in a session, and as I was one of the senior students in the class I was asked if I would do this.

Well that was it, I was hooked. I enjoyed it so much, partly because I learned a lot about myself and my own ability to help others, and answer questions about the form etc that I had no idea I knew the answers to.

I started training with other teachers to get a broader outlook on the art. This had great benefits because I found there was something to learn from each one, that gave me a different view to work on. Gradually I trained up and became a teacher myself and now believe the most

important thing that teaching Tai Chi should be based on is how to relax.

They say “everything comes from the form” and so I put great emphasis in my class on this.

However the form is very precise and for students sometimes hard to understand at first. So I began including Master Huang’s five loosening exercises (He was a senior disciple of Master Cheng Man Ching) at the beginning of the class to help line up the body and loosen muscles before they began practising.

Then by putting some emphasis on the relaxed breathing that is naturally within the postures, the students relaxed much easier and began to really “feel” the movement and transition from one posture to another.

Since training and teaching with Kai Ming I feel I have been able to be a bit of a “free spirit” and teach in a way that I feel I was meant to.

A tip I would pass on to anyone learning the art is—practice, practice, practice on your own until you feel the posture or exercise feels right and you are happy with it. Checking with your instructor that you are doing it correctly is always a good idea and may save you getting into a bad habit before it is one!

Growing up I did a lot of different sports some of which entailed me training on my own a lot, boxing being one of them, shadow boxing requires a lot of focus and I was able to use this focus I had developed within my teaching.

Maybe coach is a better word than teacher as we both learn together, exchange views, sort out problems, and all the while develop as people.

Tai Chi should be enjoyed, a time when you can relax your mind and body and focus on its benefits as you “tune out” the stresses of your day.

On a personal note, recently my Tai Chi has helped me get through the shock of finding out I had developed Prostate Cancer.

I was able to relax during hospital blood tests and biopsy, and then the ultimate fear of an MRI Scan which entailed having to lie perfectly still for an hour and a half and control my claustrophobic feelings. Scans of my bones followed which thankfully showed it had not spread to my bones and lymph nodes.

Without Tai Chi and the support of Kai-Ming I am sure I would not be in such a good place now.

Teaching has changed me in many ways. I am a more confident, positive person and have found the elusive quality of self-worth.

So this is why people become teachers I guess, and the only way to find out if this is true is to try it yourself. Don’t just take my word for it!

By Graham Lambert
Tai chi teacher and lovin it...



Meditation Part 3

What is the point of Meditation? –

Parts 1 & 2 are in our book ‘**Up Close and Personal**’ and previous newsletters.

There are three main areas to look at: Physical, Psychological and Spiritual.

Physical & Psychological

Stress – the ‘S’ word – is a major problem in the west today. Some medics and scientists believe that up to 80% of illness (presented at GP surgeries) is stress related – often chronic. Illnesses such as Hypertension, Cardiac disease, Ulcers, Skin disorders, Diabetes and even some Cancers are linked to stress and our habitual ways of coping with it. There are numerous psychological conditions linked to stress too, Depression, Panic Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Alcoholism etc. All of these are caused by and/or exacerbated by stress.

Stress is normal. Unavoidable. It is a part of life but if it is not managed well, can lead to the above. The ‘stress response’ occurs as a consequence of our Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) being activated. Briefly, when we are threatened, our bodies prepare for fight, flight or freeze via activation of the sympathetic nervous system (one branch of the ANS). This is a survival strategy left over from out mammalian days when, before conscious thought or awareness, we had to act, we had to stay safe. So, this was useful if a sabre tooth tiger jumps at you!

Today, it may be a street attack, car accident, or more commonly, an argument at home, difficult boss, deadline to meet etc. Our brain, at the level of biochemistry, bioelectricity and hormones does not discriminate – it doesn’t know the difference. So, if we are constantly becoming activated (for fight or flight or freeze), we are releasing many different chemicals into our bloodstream, and unchecked, these cause the problems. We do naturally ‘calm down’ via the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system (the second branch of the ANS) – but we leave this largely to chance – often too late, causing us to

cycle round, stop and start in a circle of panic activation or low level irritability.

And that’s the problem, we have our feet on the accelerator and the break at the same time – sometimes using drugs, alcohol, bad foods etc to try and cope or manage.

We know from research that the breath has a major effect on our bodies. Slow, regular, diaphragmatic breathing, and a calm mental focus, can activate the parasympathetic nervous system and facilitate the release of calming, feel good chemicals and help us back into a state of ease. This relaxes our bodies, and helps focus our thoughts and has innumerable benefits for our immune system and psychological functioning.

Spiritual

This is where we have to think about the world’s great ‘religions’ and ‘spiritual’ systems. Each have meditation in different forms; in Catholicism and some other Christian systems you have petitionary prayer, contemplative prayer and other ritual – sometimes profound visualisations and spoken pieces. In Hinduism, Buddhism and Daoism you have ritual also, but also other forms of meditation – some including movement and forms such as Indian Yoga and Chinese Qigong. The spiritual point, above and beyond the Physical and Psychological (arguably prerequisites) is the attainment of ‘Insight’, ‘Awakening’, ‘Liberation’, ‘Mastery’, ‘at oneness’, ‘Merger’ etc and these concepts are firmly rooted in the philosophy of the spiritual systems.

In Christianity it may be about communion with God, achieving ‘Christ Consciousness’.

In Buddhism, it is mainly about the cessation of suffering and the achievement of Nirvana, an escape from the endless cycles of death and rebirth. Being ‘Awakened’ means seeing reality as it is. Without Ego, grasping and categorizing. Sometimes, we meditate on certain forms; invoke qualities of these forms or deities for our own development or to support us through difficulties (similar to petitionary prayer).

This is similar in Hinduism and Jainism, India’s other great spiritual systems.

In Daoism, it is about ‘the Way’ – following nature, our human nature, the world, being in harmony and ‘flow’ with all that is. Inter-connected. Daoism is often called the ‘Watercourse way’.

There are different emphases on Physical or Psychological health and mastery within these (The legendary Bodhidharma, first Zen Patriarch teaching movement forms to Chinese Shaolin – eventually becoming Buddhist Qigong? Given our interests in Tai chi and Qigong, we have to acknowledge that both Buddhism and Daoism heavily influenced the development of what we do and why we do it. Some Qigong sets are evolved from Buddhist origin (Yi Jin Jing, Ba Duan Jin), others from Daoist (Microcosmic Orbit, Five Animal Play etc).

By Mark Walker



How Do I Relax?

What does the term “relax” mean in Tai Chi and how can I do it?

To relax in Tai Chi is more than just what people commonly think of when they use the word relax. To relax is our natural inheritance, we are born with this ability but many lose this in early life through the need to achieve social acceptance, or the need to be as good or better than others. We often tell ourselves when we have achieved the targets we set ourselves we will then be able to take time for ourselves and relax.

Tai Chi is a different kind of relaxation than sitting on the sofa watching television. It involves the mind, emotions, and body in different ways, and requires a certain degree of reconciliation of inner contradictions, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Cheng Man Ching refereed to this as “Sung”

To understand this we have to remember that Tai Chi commenced and still is a Martial art (even though practiced by many now as a slow moving healthy exercise) Relaxation is essential for a martial artist to be more flexible and more powerful. When relaxed muscles, joints, and mind become freer and more adaptable. All work together, the whole becomes more than the sum of the parts. The stretching and relaxing occurs vertically, horizontally, and circularly. In the torso there is a pulling upward by the lifting of the top of the head and lifting the back. At the same time, there is a pulling downward at the base of the spine, which creates traction for a healthy and flexible back. When the arm is extended, it stretches outward, but by lowering the elbow and the shoulders, there is a counter stretch.

This stretching opens up the body, improves circulation, and thereby helps generate more energy. These same functions, apply for other uses of Tai Chi Chuan for health, fitness, and self-cultivation. A good way to get the idea of the kind of relaxation that Tai Chi Chuan uses is to think of the relaxed nature of water. It is soft, changeable, and also powerful. Its power is derived in part from the way it is contained, for example, by a dam or the banks of a river.

If you can envision a sealed plastic bag filled with water, you can see the fluidity of the water and how it reacts when it is squeezed, trying to move to another location, with force when the force is strong. Yet it is always true to its relaxed nature. As human beings, we are filled with fluids and energy, and as we walk or exercise, we are exerting a certain amount of force on these fluids. Which in turn improves circulation to the cells in our major organs and brain, and helps them to function to their full capability.

If we are tense this cannot happen. Tai Chi practice helps release this tension emotionally and physically. In order to do this, we first have to be aware of the tension and its location. Shoulders?

Neck? Back? Chest? The physical points. But then the physical tension may be triggered by the mental stress of the day and in some cases is long standing or as we say chronic.

You can stand (or sit) before you start your practice of the Tai Chi exercises and find these points of tension in your body. Work from the top of your head down. If you find one, maybe in your shoulders, keep your mind focused there for a minute or two, breathe in, then breathe out and feel release. Don't force it, as trying to make yourself relax can be an extension of your tension, force against force. It may take time and patience if these are long standing tensions, but eventually you will find there is a disconnection between the tension and whatever was going on in your mind to cause the tension.

You can work through your whole body in this way.

We all need to re-gain the abilities we were born with, before life took them away.

My young granddaughter will be on the “naughty chair, taking a moment” full of tension and temper one minute and laughing or deep asleep on the floor the next.

Unlike us she and most children still have the ability to let go and relax naturally.

Maybe Tai Chi can lead us back to this wonderful state



As we are practicing tai chi sword (jen) on the advanced Sunday sessions, I thought I would share this with you



The Longquan Sword

(Dragon Well Forge)

Nestled deep in the mountains of southwest Zhejiang China is Longquan City and the Dragon Well Forge.

It is remote and off the beaten track and presents many challenges to the dedicated travellers who make their way there during their trip to China.

So what is the attraction?

Longquan in China is a city of crafts persons. Three main ones date back hundreds/thousands years.

These are Ceramics (especially Longquan Celadon Plates which have a distinctive translucent crackled green glaze)

Stone-cutters producing stone lions, tomb markers etc

And finally the art that Longquan is most famous for in martial art circles SWORDS.

Longquan boasts over 200 sword forges and produces some of the finest weapons in China.

There are small family operated forges up to full scale factories.

The history of sword masterworks goes back into antiquity.

There are stories documented of the legendary swordsmith Ou Yezi and his skill.

The making of these swords was interrupted for a while because of modern events in Chinese history, but today produces many blades of masterful functionality and beauty.

Longquan spring steel swords are considered to be of the highest quality for performance, whilst the combat steel swords tend towards strength and considerable sharpness.

It is said that you need to shop around if you visit this city to purchase one, because as would be expected there are lots of stores selling them.

The ability to speak a little Mandarin is also helpful because it is said the finest blades are kept in a back room under lock and key awaiting someone worthy of them who will appreciate their worth (and

who know doubt will have to have a few Yen on them!)

There is a trend at times to produce historical replicas. Many swords are designed to replicate the pattern of Qin and Hin dynasty blades.

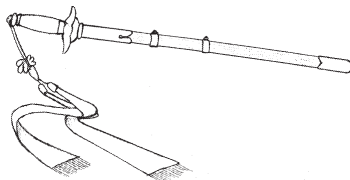
Movie replicas are also popular in Longquan.

In particular the sword used by Jet Li in HERO and the sword used to kill the king in THE PROMISE are being used as the pattern for rather beautiful replicas.

The shopper can at least be assured that although they need to be a little prudent,

look around, and haggle over price, some of the swords sold in Longquan are literally not available anywhere else, and if they are then the price would be significantly increased

Longquan forges boast a long list of famous customers, from stars of Wushu and martial arts cinema such as Jet Li to famous politicians including Chairman Mao and Richard Nixon!



Holiday in Cornwall?



If any club members are interested in a holiday near Bude, Cornwall, we have a two bedroom bungalow (sleeps 6) and can offer a great price out of season. Please contact Jenny and Mark on **0121 251 6172** for details.

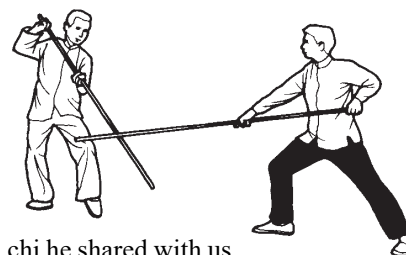
Tai Chi Legacy Weekend - 5th & 6th August 2017

The days will run

- 9.30 for 10am start
- 10am to 12.30pm with a 10 minute break about 11.30am.
- Lunch 12.30 to 1.30pm – Please bring a light lunch with you.
- 1.30pm to 4.30pm with a 10 minute break about 2.45pm

The Location:

Weoley Hill Village Hall,
Weoley Hill, Bournville/Selly Oak.
Birmingham B29 4AD



Every year we like to celebrate Prof. Cheng Man Ching's life and the great art of tai chi he shared with us.

This years focus will be on Gettin' the TRUE measure of it all as this has been the most requested across the classes; understanding correct form movement to truly apply form and function. We will work on not just the shape of the postures but the underlying function. We will look at the tai chi classics and apply them to whole body movement, intrinsic strength, kinetic and potential energy, spatial awareness, agility, and mindfulness. The weekend is open to all levels and will give everyone a chance to deepen their knowledge and love for the art of tai chi chuan

Saturday 5th will focus on Chi-Kung (qigong) and Tai Chi structure, or as my wife likes to call it "*Hands, knees and booms-a-daisy*".

We will look at the natural elastic strength of muscles and tendons when in correct alignment. A stretching muscle is up to 10 times stronger than a contracting muscle. By applying the intrinsic strength of relaxed compression all strain is released from the body and able to be directed where needed. Contraction causes stresses in your body and restricts natural flow.

The day will focus on developing natural flow and harnessing natural elastic energy both for self-defence (martial) and self-defence (life balance).

Sunday 6th Will be Weapons Day. I will be teaching tai chi staff form and applications for balance and footwork. The form is relatively simple to learn and was taught to me by Grand-Master Tan Soew Theng in Malaysia.

DVD's will be available at £20 and staffs (by order) at £15. The Staff are rattan and slightly flexible rather than stiff hardwood Bo staff.

Cost and Payment options

You can pay £40 (Kai Ming members), £60 (non-members) per day by cash or cheque to '**Kai Ming Martial Arts Association**' and post to Mark Peters, 3 Middleton Hall Road, Birmingham B30 1AB

Payment due by the 7th July. After this price increases to £50 per day members and £70 non-members. Any payments made on the weekend are CASH ONLY

How to Book

Please pay contact mark on **0121 251 6172** or email markpeters@kaiming.co.uk or speak to your Kai Ming Instructor