



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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Ben's Award

Some of your longer-term students will know Ben Lee. He has been with us 20 years!! At the 2019 Christmas meal we awarded him a 20 years award trophy for his commitment and contribution to Kai Ming. When he first came with his mother (Jenny Lee) in 1999 I thought he was only 15, and was going to let him attend for free as a minor, but his youthful looks belied him as he was already in his 20's and a successful accountant.

He won't mind me saying, but came initially to help with his confidence and dyspraxia. He actually improved so much that he trained as an instructor and ran a class in Bromsgrove for many years, until life took over. He still attends the monthly training sessions and still practices, keeping tai chi as an important part of his life.

He is a great friend and student and the award is well deserved.



New Instructors graded for Kaiming

In December we held a grading for our new trainee instructors, plus Sarah Taylor moved up from Junior to full instructor. New junior instructors are: Bob Hawkesford (Hopwood), Jenny Winsper (Tamworth), Sam Ahmed (Handsworth Wood), Kath Payne, Linda Barrett and Caroline Gibson (Lichfield). Congratulations to all for all their hard work.

Thoughts from the writings of Prof Cheng Man Ching Lao Shr

WUWEI

Attack and defence happen at the count of one. It is not a conscious act; rather it is an awareness that transcends all desire. When one feels that one has not done anything and yet succeeds, then one has achieved something. This is called wu wei. (non-doing, effortless action)

In repelling force, there must be the automatic yielding (going to the root) and attacking, which works when one is receiving punches or trying to uproot the opponent. It should happen at the count of one. This is the key. Achieving this, one has mastered the art. Once accomplished, one can refine it and refine it. The process has no limit.

Teach the Body to Trust

If the right hand is not neutralized, do not aggravate the situation by adding strength through the left hand (double weighting). Otherwise the attack will be stronger and the results tragic.

Teach the body to trust in a state of relaxation which is a state of defenselessness. Teach the mind first and then let the mind teach the body.

The Discipline of Longevity

In Single Whip, while the left, forward foot turns with the waist/hip, the right shoulder stays with the right back foot, thus opening up the lungs. This posture is directly related to Lao Shr's illness (tuberculosis). Lao Shr's teacher spent seven years teaching him that opening. It was beneficial for his lungs once he corrected himself. Correct work is an investment in our future.

On Push-hands

When you feel a person is heavy, you are already heavy. Leave the heaviness alone. Look for the empty spot. If the opponent is heavy, there is always an

empty spot. If you push heavy you just put heavy on top of heavy. If you feel a person is heavy, relax. Experiment. Don't hold on to one thing.

Hold like you would the sword. Listen and go with the current. Hold the opponent like you would your sword: softly, lightly but firmly.

Pay attention to minute details. Those minute details are very important and are exactly the spots where you need to relax the most. If you are a little off, you will never be able to relax. You must be precisely correct so every part of the body can move smoothly and freely.

It is not enough to push into the root. You have to uproot.

When you lay your hands on somebody, you have their centre already, all the time. There is no need to move your hands around.

Whenever you feel the person's strength, relax at that particular spot and then start your ti fang. This applies both to a push or a neutralization.



Wabi Sabi - a Japanese Philosophy

In traditional Japanese aesthetics, wabi-sabi is a world view centered on the acceptance of transience and imperfection. The aesthetic is sometimes described as one of beauty that is "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete" (Wikipedia)

I first came across this term when I saw a print of a painting in a shop window. The painting appealed to me through its textures, sense of simplicity that was conveyed in the scene of a bright moon shining over fields and a remote bothy

style cottage. The artist was Louise O'Hara and I decided to research her artistic background. This is where I became aware of the term 'Wabi Sabi' as Louise had apparently been inspired by this concept and attitude to imperfection and acceptance of how things are instead of thinking things should be a certain way. This approach appealed to me so I wanted to know more. I bought the following book :

The book 'Wabi Sabi – Japanese Wisdom for a Perfectly Imperfect Life' by Beth Kempton describes Wabi sabi ("wah-bi sah-bi") as 'a captivating concept from Japanese aesthetics, which helps us to see beauty in imperfection, appreciate simplicity and accept the transient nature of all things. With roots in zen and the way of tea, the timeless wisdom of wabi sabi is more relevant than ever for modern life, as we search for new ways to approach life's challenges and seek meaning beyond materialism.

Wabi sabi is a refreshing antidote to our fast-paced, consumption-driven world, which will encourage you to slow down, reconnect with nature, and be gentler on yourself. It will help you simplify everything, and concentrate on what really matters.

From honouring the rhythm of the seasons to creating a welcoming home, from reframing failure to ageing with grace, wabi sabi will teach you to find more joy and inspiration throughout your perfectly imperfect life.

This book is the definitive guide to applying the principles of wabi sabi to transform every area of your life, and finding happiness right where you are.' Amazon review.

I enjoyed the book and reading more about this approach to life and thinking about how I could apply it to my own life each day. It made me reflect on the extent to which I possibly already adopt it. After all, when I do any painting or sewing, I have always taken the attitude of 'as long as it looks good on the outside, it will do'. For example when I have upcycled furniture, I never paint underneath or inside the drawers – only what is visible so certainly not a professional job but good enough. I then wondered what that

says about my approach to life in general. Maybe I already have the 'wabi sabi' attitude of imperfection?

I don't do perfection but that has never stopped me from enjoying the bigger outcome of producing something that is pleasing to my eye and hopefully the eyes of those who visit my house despite the underlying flaws. Does this view extend into my wider life I wondered?

The more I think about Wabi Sabi and the sense of contentment that this can bring, I think that I connected with that painting I saw in the window because its style of roughness and imperfection is within me. One of my aims this year is to have some art lessons to help me paint in a similar vein so I can express this attitude as I now acknowledge that I have always taken this 'it will do' approach. If it bugged me, then surely I would have changed by now. Don't get me wrong, I have always striven to do my best in whatever I have done but I have never been obsessed with what I have perceived to be unnecessary detail. I have maybe just been happy with creating something – the bigger picture.

On a broader note then, how can such a relaxed style be applied to everyday life and how can it be a positive? If it helps us to take our foot off the fast pedal and accept things as they are then that has to be a good thing right? When things don't turn out exactly how we had planned, should we just look at the available positives as there are always positives in the end even if we may not sense any at the time.

With regards to Tai Chi, this is where I think the path of learning the form is similar to the Wabi Sabi way. It slows us down and gets us to reflect on the moment (with all its imperfections in my case when I do it wrong!). At the same time though, Tai Chi is about the detail and it does matter here so maybe that is what I am learning as well as the moves, that sometimes it is attention to detail when it really counts that enables us even more to focus and be at peace more with the world in that moment. Maybe my 'all fur and no knickers' style to crafts

is ok some of the time but not all : sometimes the detail does matter in what we do especially when we need to get it right as in Tai Chi when we will be passing our knowledge onto others. As often is the case, it's about balance. Wabi Sabi with a bit of detail when needed sounds about right. Anyway, Happy New Year to you all - may it be a good one despite any possible imperfections.

By Caroline Gibson - Junior Instructor

Further Reading

Wabi Sabi - Beth Kempton

<https://www.collierdobson.com/products/a-frosty-moon>



New for 2020

As we move into this new decade, we decided to launch a new shirt design to promote the message ***“Real Tai Chi for real people”***.

Tai Chi and qigong are becoming so popular that we're being featured on TV and adverts. Would-be instructors are popping up everywhere, many of whom have never even received face-to-face tuition!!

We have been teaching in and around Birmingham for some 25+ years.

The design was the brainchild of Jenny Peters and illustrated by Hunt Emerson. You may notice the homage to Northern Soul in the design too.

Tops available by order.

They are white printed on royal blue.

Please ask your instructor if you'd like to see one and place an order.

£10 t-shirts (members)

£12 (non-members)

£15 long-sleeve (members)

£18 (non-members).

There is no Transition

Do you remember those pre Tai Chi days when you used to get in your car or walk down the high street, and all of a sudden you were at your destination! The transition (or as I prefer to call it – the Journey) was ‘lost’. You missed the whole journey, experience, that’s part of your valuable life – your mind was ‘somewhere else’, or ‘a blank’, or focused on the end of the journey.

Whatever ‘valid’ reason you came up with – you missed the journey – you were basically not in full control, not with it, not consciously aware, not mindful, and not living in the second.

The same can be said (sometimes) of the macro level too – “don’t the weeks, year’s wiz by”.

With Tai Chi we have all learned to be present, mindful and aware.

So when doing the form (say) I now never think/feel I am moving from one ‘position’ to another. As every second, every sub-second, of that journey is a unique flow. Sometimes both feet are on the ground – but always feeling the ground more with one foot than the other, always moving, sometimes one foot on the ground and the other off the ground, always feeling aligned with gravity.

But never stagnate, never stuck, never not moving - however slowly, however little the move. So I try and feel every sub-second as its own unique movement along that 5, 10, 15 minute continually following journey.

There is no transition – it is all a continual journey to be enjoyed

by Alan Sanson



Many hours are spent on administration for Kaiming & Painting the Rainbow by Jenny, which is unpaid as is all the paper work Mark has to attend to, to ensure the smooth running of the Association. We felt we would like to donate money from the Association in lieu of this time to charity, and below is a list of the 6 charities that have benefited this year. Not large amounts to each one but we feel by splitting it between these 6 worthy charities we can help more deserving causes.

CHARITIES DONATED TO

- Guide dogs for the blind
- Bears Asia
- Spana Donkey Charity
- Litchfield Churches Together Night Shelter for Homeless
- Nuneaton & Warwickshire Wildlife Sanctuary
- Sightsavers Africa

The Miracle of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the miracle which calls back in a flash our dispersed mind and restores it to wholeness so that we can live each moment of life.

I was given a book recently by a friend that made me reconsider my focus a little. The book was called ‘the miracle of mindfulness’ and is a Zen manual for meditation. As I read and digested each page it reminded me of a Chinese proverb we’ve spoken of before, ‘neglecting the near in search of the far’; but more than this it tells us to focus on each instant and enjoy its detail. I will quote the Sutra of mindfulness and go from there:

When walking, the practitioner must be conscious that he is walking. When sitting, the practitioner must be conscious that he is sitting. When lying down, the practitioner must be conscious that he is lying down.... No matter what position one’s body is in, the practitioner must be conscious of that position, Practising thus, the practitioner lives in direct and constant mindfulness of the body...

Over the next few weeks just try and pay attention to the instant you are in and experience it.

My aim is not to go all ‘new-age’ on you; it is to highlight the importance of mind

and body as one. We are a collection of learnt experiences but we generally do not choose how to experience the experiences, rather we let them happen to us. Maybe you’ve heard somebody say “They always get themselves into a terrible state” but what does this really mean? To learn more efficiently to be in control of the state we are in, we need to pay close attention to the moment we are in and build a sort of calibrated scale of feeling and experience. Why muddle through for years and years making slow progress.

The old Chinese saying of ‘We must learn to taste bitter before we can taste sweet’

is very wise; it doesn’t say how much bitter or for how long.... Did you know our brains are programmed to see the negative before the positive in everything? This is essential to our fight or flight response. To learn, be mindful of your response so it can be learnt more quickly and allowed to develop into an unconscious action. Through mindful practice, notice the natural change from bitter to sweet and feel the feeling.....

Tai Chi is an art of change, ever evolving and moving with the flow of life, not standing still or stagnating; embrace this change. When you are aware and accept that everything around you is constantly changing, and that you have no control over 99% of it, you are able to embrace change like a close friend! Change is a like a river, constantly flowing and moving things around. The river of life is constantly bringing you ideas, people, situations – each one is an opportunity to be enriched or to enrich others, and to learn.

Try and focus on developing a natural root and ‘whole body movement’, not just in one direction but all directions, walking through some of the postures like lotus kick to pay attention to the potential of each step. To be aware that all parts are alive and vital, one must be mindful of the whole. Push hands is an act of non-resistance, of blending with all around you, and so is the form. To bask in each moment is the true glory of Tai Chi, to be aware of yourself and all around you will show you the wonders that life has to offer. But before you all start to run screaming “Mad hippy”, know that Tai Chi is truly a martial art of amazing refinement, able to offer each of you with the patience, great rewards.

by Mark Peters

ROLL BACK

Using your opponent's weight and balance against him.



Confessions of a Pusher.

A few weeks ago, I had a revelation. One of those moments of absolute clarity when something that you previously did not understand, suddenly becomes perfectly obvious.

My moment of insight came shortly after the Spring Camp at Unstone Grange, and was caused by events at that camp. I had been pushing hands with a student who attends the class at which I assist. During the session, he managed to push me off-

balance twice. How did I feel? Well, actually, I was pleased to see the increase in skill demonstrated by “my” student. I also felt that I was taking the occasional “defeat” well,....investing in loss. Lao Tsu wrote “Gentle the will in order to strengthen the bones”, and Cheng Man Ching taught that before one can aspire to the highest levels of Tai Chi Chuan abilities, the ego must be suppressed. He exhorts us to become mild and gentle in demeanour, rather than arrogant and over-inflated, and to invest in loss. Surely I was doing just that.

After a while, we changed partners, and I found myself standing opposite one of the most senior of our instructors. After ten minutes of earnest effort, I hadn't once come near to disturbing this man's equilibrium. He, on the other hand, with the softest of hands, had tipped, toppled, pulled, pushed and turned me to every point of the compass. How did I feel? Well, actually,....bloody frustrated! I berated myself for lack of sensitivity and little or no rooting ability, and resolved to get in a lot more Push Hands practice.

It was only some days later, when mulling over these events, that I suddenly thought, “Why was I not equally as pleased to invest in loss at the hands of one of my teachers, as I was at the hands of one of my students?” And then the blinding light hit me, like Saul on the road to Damascus. I hadn't suppressed the old enemy - ego - after all. It was still there, as arrogant as ever. I took pleasure in being pushed off-balance by my student because it proved what a great teacher I am, imparting skills effortlessly. I didn't react quite so well to being pushed by my teacher, because my ego couldn't find a good enough excuse.

Thanks to this insight, I'm on my guard again. I have renewed my battle to suppress the ego. I will treat every occasion that I am pushed off-balance as a tiny step in the learning process, no matter who does the pushing. I resolve to become a better person. Now where's that newest student? I want to show him how easily I can uproot him.

by Mike Gibson



Become a Painting the Rainbow Tai Chi Qigong Instructor

Have you ever thought you'd like to help out at your tai chi class? Have you ever wondered what is needed to start the journey of becoming an instructor? Would you like to help other people, maybe even have your own class?

Maybe 2020 is your year to get involved... We're always looking for keen personable people as there are so many people out there that can benefit from attending classes but we need more people to make that possible.

If you are interested, please contact Jenny or Mark on 0121 251 6172 or maybe speak to your instructor as they will have a list of the requirements.



Advanced classes / instructor training

Venue: Weoley Hill Village Hall, Weoley Hill, Bournville.

Sunday: 9.30-12.30 advanced classes (£30)

Dec. 8th - includes grading

2020 dates

Jan. 12th

Feb. 16th

March 1st

April 19th

May 10th

PLEASE NOTE:

Please send your Newsletter contributions for future issues to markpeters@kaiming.co.uk