



## Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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As another year draws to a close it feels like time to reflect. It has been 25 years since Kai Ming was formed and 10 years since Painting the Rainbow was born. So many things have happened including the amazing growth of tai chi in parks across the city; I am working with CIMPSA to setup national accreditation to enable tai chi and chi-kung (qigong) to be more widely accepted and accessed by the NHS; we were featured on Trust me I'm a Doctor and were able to show, through scientific research, that tai chi is an excellent form of exercise and as cardiovascular as Zumba! Plus, one of our groups even won a Queens award... More and more organizations and clubs are contacting us to arrange for us to deliver classes and discuss forging links with their association and to discuss their individual needs. Others' may say they teach tai chi but we are definitely leading on quality and application.

A few of my teachers either passed this year or became seriously ill and it made me think of our mortality... I do worry that as our instructors grow older, and less students show interest in making the commitment to train up, that our club may eventually fade away. We have built a wonderful tai chi family and seen so many benefit in so many different ways, so I truly hope that reading this may inspire you to become part of our instructor team.

### The Five Integrities

I thought I would share some wise teachings from Ken Van Sickle with you. He was one of Prof. Cheng Man Ching's senior students. These thoughts are relating to efficiency and reality in doing Tai Chi form and Push hands: personally, physically, morally, martially, and spiritually.

#### **1. Personal Integrity**

On a personal level, you must be true to yourself, in the beginning, when learning the form, do not compare yourself to others. Many students worry about not getting it fast enough, or appearing clumsy. These concerns show up as tension in the mind and the body.

People start out with many different abilities in memory, suppleness, tension and spatial awareness. All these seem to equalize themselves, and in the end, it turns out that positive thinking, perseverance, and thoughtfulness, produce the best results.

Give yourself a break, learn at your speed, enjoy the experience, and lighten up!

#### **2. Physical Integrity**

Be heavy and rooted on the bottom, light and supple on top (roots and branches). Do not move the arms separately from the body, move as one unit, flowing and uninterrupted... No hollows or protrusions; weight down from the coccyx and up from the top of the head. Stretching the spine... Relax, relax, breathe, breathe, breathe.... How many times have we heard these and other principles of Tai Chi? How many times do we hear people saying, "Why doesn't Tai Chi work?" or, "why aren't I improving?"

Tai Chi is not ballroom dancing or flying airplanes. If you forget a few basics of dancing you may look a little clumsy, or at worst step on a few toes. If you forget a few basics of aeronautics you might crash; Tai Chi falls somewhere in the middle. When you forget a few principles in Tai Chi, you are not doing Tai Chi; you are sailing in the mud, surfing in the soup. Link each movement to the next without pausing. Link each movement to the next without hesitation or change of speed; find the natural swing and return.

#### **3. Martial Integrity**

Each move in the form has multiple martial functions. As you are doing the moves, make sure that these principles are kept in mind. If you are following the basic principles of Tai Chi, you are practicing the martial aspect correctly, and at a certain point in your studies, you can begin to address this aspect more directly.

If you are working on the martial aspect, certain elements need particular attention paid to them. Imagine an opponent in front of you and begin to focus and issue energy to the centre of that opponent. Broaden your awareness of the space around you, and other energy sources. Pay particular attention to the substantial and to the insubstantial in relation to the issue of energy, and to the neutralization of force. Do not get caught up in the dance. Keep your spontaneity and flexibility at all times. Do not anticipate or plan moves ahead of time, be mindful, be in the moment.

Always remain aware and sensitive, spontaneous and flexible.

#### **4. Moral Integrity**

It is possible to study Tai Chi for a while, learn many techniques, use many or most of the principles and use strength to

become very good at Pushing hands. Usually, people who do this, have winning as their highest priority. Two things, at least, result from this condition: One is that the practitioner never reaches the highest level. And the other is that this person's relative success tends to impress others and invalidate the true principles of Tai Chi. It takes a lot of faith to continue to lose day after day to people you know you can beat if you use your strength; to invest in loss.

Many of the female Tai Chi players I have talked to, have expressed a fear to really try to push the males. They say the men get upset and push them back very hard. This is male ego in one of its nastier manifestations. You would think that every Tai Chi player would be happy to see a validation of the principle of the weak overcoming the strong. Yet, when it happens, most of the strong men become children.

We must take care of our partners in Push hands. Its purpose is to learn, teach, practice; not win, the winning is in the learning.

If you are winning at pushing because of double weighting, bracing the legs etc., this will not translate into fighting. Tai Chi does not work in the horse stance; at close quarters, it leaves one vulnerable. You can push someone if that is all you want to do. By abandoning all your defensive integrity to get the push, will not reach the highest levels.

### 5. Spiritual Integrity

At some point, you may want to explore meditation in movement. You cannot meditate while you are thinking outside of the moment you are in.

It helps to do the form slowly. It may seem too difficult to take an hour to do your form, so just start by doing the form at a speed that would take an hour if you did it all. Stop when you must, but that way you will begin to get the feeling, and perhaps you will find yourself going farther than you thought.

Listen to your breath.

A freely falling body does not feel the effect of gravity. A standing body feels

the effect of gravity as it resists it. A force can only be received if it is resisted. A body that is tense, is stiff and static; a body that is relaxed, is free and flexible. When a fist meets a small part of a large body that is free, resilient and flexible (meets no resistance), it causes no damage.... Be FREE to flow and feel.



Our own Hunt Emerson (Handsworth class) is pretty famous and is holding his first commercial exhibition of his art and illustration in 20 years. It opens Tuesday December 4th at the Primitivo on Barwick Street in Birmingham. It runs until February 2019. For more details visit <https://bit.ly/2E22s4z>

There is an old saying "the teacher is the taught" which really means to truly understand a skill you should look to teach it to others. I mentioned at the beginning of the newsletter that 2019 could be the year that you train to be an instructor or even just to help your instructor in class.

Following on from our Sunday morning advanced training sessions 9.30-12.30, we will be running instructor training sessions from 1-3pm and each session will focus on how to teach aspects and approaches to tai chi and chi-kung (qigong). You are welcome to attend either or both session so please check with your instructor if you are unsure.

Call Mark on 0121 251 6172 to discuss. The sooner you start the better. Training program starts February 10th 2019 so register your interest.

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

**Sunday:** 9.30-12.30 advanced classes (£30), 1-3pm trainee classes (£10)

### Dates for 1st half of 2019

Jan. 13th  
Feb. 10th  
March 10th  
April 14th  
May 19th  
June 30th

## Extract taken from the book The Velveteen Rabbit

The Velveteen Rabbit is a children's book written in 1922 by Margery Williams about a little rabbit toy who became "real" because of a child's love. I have read it many times as have many other adults because it is such a lovely story beautifully written and is really all about what love can achieve that can never be taken away from you.

Thought it might be a nice thought to end the year.

Generally by the time you are "real" most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby.

But these things don't matter at all, because once you are real you can't be ugly except to people who don't understand.

..... and so time went on, and the little rabbit was very happy, so happy that he never noticed how his beautiful fur was getting shabbier and shabbier and his tail becoming unsewn, and all the pink rubbed off his nose where the boy had kissed him.

To him he was always beautiful, and that was all the little rabbit cared about.

He didn't mind how he looked to other people, because the boy had made him real, and when you are real shabbiness doesn't matter because "real" lasts forever.

