



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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Painting the Rainbow Newsletter Relaunched

I last produced a specific Painting the Rainbow Tai Chi & Qigong Newsletter in 2020 and have decided to relaunch it for 2025 as it is A4 double-sided and health focused; it will be bi-monthly.

The 4-page Kaiming Newsletter will switch to bi-monthly, as a more in-depth edition specifically for our Kaiming tai chi chuan classes. Kaiming students will continue to receive both newsletters as part of their membership.

First this first new edition I have chosen to look at the often overlooked social benefits of tai chi & qigong classes.



The Social Benefits of Tai Chi and Qigong: Connecting Through Movement

Tai Chi and Qigong are well known for their physical and mental health benefits, but what often goes unspoken is their incredible ability to bring people together. Whether practised in a dedicated indoor class or amongst the natural beauty of a park, these ancient arts foster a sense of community, connection, and shared well-being.

I have personally found that attending regular Tai Chi and Qigong classes has enriched my life in more ways than I could have imagined. While I initially sought out these practices as a martial art, I soon realised that the friendships and social bonds formed in these sessions were just as valuable as the movements themselves.

Indoor Classes: A Space for Connection

When stepping into an indoor Tai Chi or Qigong class, there is an immediate sense of calm and camaraderie. The structured environment provides a space free from distractions, allowing us to focus on refining our movements while engaging with like-minded individuals. Over time, faces become familiar, and friendships naturally blossom.

One of the great advantages of indoor classes is the accessibility they provide. Regardless of the weather, we can gather in a comfortable, warm space, supporting each other in our practice. Many stay behind after class, sharing stories, discussing techniques, or simply enjoying a cup of tea together. These moments of connection help to build a supportive network, reducing feelings of isolation and encouraging us to continue our practice.

Practising in the Park: A Shared Experience in Nature

There is something truly special about practising Tai Chi and Qigong outdoors. I first started teaching the Cotteridge Park class in 2011 following the success of the sessions at the CoCoMad Festival at Cotteridge Park. Meeting in a park, surrounded by trees and fresh air, adds an extra dimension to the experience. The gentle rustling of leaves, the chirping of birds, and the feeling of the ground beneath our feet create a harmonious connection between movement and nature. This initial session inspired the growth of the 'Tai Chi in the Park' project to over 25 parks across Birmingham, and now a Facebook group with approximately 2000 members, sharing the practice more widely.

Group practice in the park attracts a wonderful mix of people, from complete beginners to seasoned practitioners. There is a collective energy that forms as we move in unison, a silent yet powerful bond between individuals sharing the same space and intention. Strangers become acquaintances, and acquaintances become friends.

Another beautiful aspect of outdoor practice is the sense of inclusivity it fosters. Passers-by often pause to watch, some curious enough to join in. It creates an atmosphere of openness, where people feel welcomed and encouraged to take part, even if only for a few moments. This social element extends beyond our practice, often leading to impromptu conversations and new friendships.

Building a Supportive Community

Beyond the benefits of movement, the social aspects of Tai Chi and Qigong help combat loneliness and build a sense of belonging. Many of us lead busy or solitary lives, and coming together to practise offers a moment of shared experience that can uplift our spirits. The simple act of moving in harmony with others reinforces a feeling of unity and connection; a bond over a shared love of the arts we practice.

Personally, I have found that the friendships formed in these settings are genuine and enduring. Whether sharing a laugh over a tricky movement or offering encouragement during a challenging sequence, there is a mutual respect and kindness that underpins these interactions. The practice becomes more than just a physical discipline—it becomes a gateway to meaningful social engagement.

Conclusion

Tai Chi and Qigong are not just solitary pursuits; they are powerful tools for building community and fostering human connection. Whether indoors or in the park, practising together creates a supportive and enriching environment where friendships flourish, and well-being is shared. If you have ever considered trying Tai Chi or Qigong, I encourage you to join a class—not only for the health benefits but for the wonderful people you will meet along the way. Classes are listed at www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk

Heather's 80th Birthday 2025

Last month on March 28th we celebrated Heather's 80th Birthday with a big presentation at our Thursday evening Tai Chi session.

There's few of you who won't know Heather Lomas from one of the groups she takes, or from Sunday Training or at some point been thrown across the room by her!!! But we also know her from her dedication to Kaiming, Painting the Rainbow and to all her students and colleagues.

Heather has many hobbies and interests outside of Tai Chi. She helps to run the Astronomy Group at Rosliston Forestry Centre. She is the Treasurer for Lichfield Wildlife Group. She's the captain of her bowels team; but one of her biggest passions is her garden. Heather has a huge garden, well over an acre in size, so I didn't have any problems in getting her something for her to enjoy in her garden.



So Thursday evening we presented her, along with cards from all the groups she takes, a beautiful solar powered water feature, a wind chime as well as a bouquet of flowers. I also bought her a couple of stone animals one of which was a hedgehog which Heather has a great affection for. The last couple of years Kaiming has made a donation to the local Hedgehog Rescue at Heather's request.

The other stone animal was an Owl as it reminded me of the Tai Chi saying, "Imagine an owl sitting on top of your head" (see attached photo)



Everyone was so generous with their donations that we were also able to give Heather some money so she could treat herself to something she would like.. She has mentioned a new lens for her camera... As photography is another passion of hers.

I would also like to give a shout out to the following people as without their help I would not have managed to get this all done. They are Tracey Brookes from Rosliston Kaiming Group, Frankie Kitson from Lichfield PtR Group and Kathy Ingram from Tamworth PtR Group



Sarah Taylor, Instructor - Lichfield

The Role of Perseverance in Tai Chi

Ma Yueh Liang said, "*There is no mystique to Tai Chi Chuan. What is difficult is the perseverance. It took me ten years to discover my chi, but thirty years to learn how to use it*".

I remember when I took my first class as a tai chi instructor, we had a discussion about the qualities that the new students thought might be required to learn tai chi. Maybe balance? Possibly strength or flexibility? What about coordination? No – these are certainly useful but not essential. Above all, the one quality that helps students to achieve success more than anything is perseverance – to keep going despite the occasional instances of self-doubting.

Perseverance is defined as '**persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.**' Considering my own journey, I would agree with this. It is a quality that comes from within and is nurtured as we journey along the path of self-discovery and learning that tai chi offers. There have been many times when my self confidence in my ability or memory has been challenged but here I am many years later enjoying my personal journey of learning .

Encouragement from others plays a vital part in developing and maintaining a positive attitude and determination whether from a fellow instructor or fellow students. As with us all, nothing gives us more pleasure than seeing our students develop their understanding and hear their stories of how tai chi has improved their quality of life whether through improved balance and self-awareness, enjoyment of the social interaction or any of the other many benefits. As an instructor, I would definitely not be teaching if I did not 100% believe in the benefits of tai chi. But to reiterate, perseverance is a personal quality that tests us all when we learn something new- sometimes we have to dig deep and keep pushing ourselves which we will do if we know the end game is worth it as we physically, spiritually and emotionally experience the benefits.



To mark the second anniversary of my group, students were presented with a certificate as recognition of their achievement and for demonstrating perseverance as they continue onto the next phase of their tai chi journey . I rest assured however that they will all continue to succeed as I know that they all possess that one essential personal quality namely perseverance as referred to by Ma Yueh Liang.

By Caroline Gibson, Instructor – Shropshire & Shrewsbury