



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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Welcome to the first issue of the Painting the Rainbow (PtR) Newsletter.

The aim of PtR is and always has been 'To make tai chi and Chi-kung (qigong) available to everyone in an accessible way'. To this end we continue to run classes open to anybody who has an interest in taking part, for local and national organisations such as BeActive, AgeUK, Aquarius, the Alzheimer's Society, The NHS, The Stroke Association, Multiple Sclerosis Society and more.

The aim of our Newsletter is to share experiences of some of the students and instructors alike, share research and useful information, share thoughts and ideas and even share recipes, poems and more. With this in mind please send us your thoughts and contributions as you will be surprised how impactful they will be.



A Journey of a Thousand Miles Starts With the First Step! *(A Chinese Proverb)*

I have suffered for many years with pain and discomfort in my joints and muscles, then, 2 years ago, I was diagnosed with Joint Hyper Mobility Syndrome and Fibromyalgia.

Before my diagnosis and during my first year, I saw at least 3 different physiotherapists who tried to help me with different methods and exercises, some of which were too painful to do. It was during an educational session for the Fibromyalgia that it was mentioned that Tai Chi, along with a few other things, was a possible way of helping.

A group of us sought out a Tai Chi class close to the hospital and we went a couple of times. However, this class was too far for me to travel to every week.

So I went on the internet to see if there was a class nearer to where I live and 'Hey presto!' Kai Ming popped up! I emailed and asked if someone with my condition could go along; I received an email from Mark Peters who told me I was more than welcome to join. I went along to my first session and met the instructor, Heather, who could not have been nicer or more supportive. She understood my limitations along with the things that I could do.

That was over a year ago and I've come on a long way. When I first started I couldn't lift my arms any higher than my shoulders. A Qigong movement Heather named 'Picking the Apple off the Tree' has helped me to get them above my head; I still can't go all the way up, but I'm so much better. Some of the 'warm up' moves we do I have found myself doing these without even thinking; (it's a bit embarrassing in the supermarket queue!!). The Tai Chi stance has started to help with my posture; it's very different to how I used to stand, and is starting to help manage the pain, especially in my upper back.

Learning 'The Form' has also been a challenge - not only physically but

mentally, as my memory had been affected by the Fibromyalgia. I know it's not a great deal but I can now go up to 'Cross Hands' without thinking too much. I have progressed further in The Form to 'Repulse Monkey' but it is taking me a while to get it into my head.

Last May Heather asked me if I would like to try a different exercise sequence using a Ball to see if it would help me. I started with a small 0.5kg ball but quite quickly progressed to 1kg. It is a different way of doing Tai Chi; a lot of the moves are very similar to what we already do but using a ball instead. The ball gives you something extra to focus on and almost becomes a part of you, like an extension of yourself. As the ball is weighted it helps with my muscle tone and joints. I love using my ball (which I have affectionately called 'Bob') everyday and find it's starting to help with some of my pain as well as mobility.

Four months ago Heather told me about 'Painting the Rainbow', and asked if I would like to come along to a class she was starting in Tamworth for people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), as well as for people with other disabilities including balance problems. She was going to use the Tai Chi Ball program with the group, as well as other Qigong sequences and exercises. Of course, I said yes as I knew her way of teaching would be great for them, and another class a week would be beneficial to me.

We have now been following the 'Painting the Rainbow' program for 3 months and the reaction is very positive. Some of the people that come are in wheelchairs or have a walking aid, and cannot stand for very long, so I have been learning how to do the 'warm up' moves and 'The

Form' sitting down so Heather can also teach them how even being seated doesn't restrict anyone from doing Tai Chi and Qigong. She uses me as a bit of an example, sharing how far I have come, and sometimes uses me as a guinea pig to help give them the confidence to do it.' Painting the Rainbow' is very different to my Tai Chi class. It still has the Tai Chi feeling, and we adapt quite a few of the warm up exercises and the Qigong sequences as it is much more geared to helping them to start to build up some of their lost muscle tone plus helping with their balance. It is also giving them the confidence to say yes I may be in a wheelchair, or yes I cannot stand for very long because of my balance, but I can do this; just like I was over a year ago. The Tai Chi Ball exercises are another great way of doing this and they are enjoyed by everyone.

It has now been 14 months since my first Tai Chi class and I absolutely love it, I have met some wonderful new friends and it has given me a whole new confidence. Yes, I still struggle, and may continue to struggle. Some weeks in class I am in tears because of the pain from my medical condition, but I struggle on as I am determined to do it and because I love it so much. I could not have come this far without the support of my family, my new friends in the class, the Kai Ming Association, 'Painting the Rainbow', and of course, Heather.

The confidence and the inspiration they have given me is amazing and Tai Chi is now a wonderful part of my life. I still have quite a lot of miles to go but I'm so glad that I took 'The First Step'.

Sarah Taylor – Lichfield student



Useful website for tai chi research

If you do not have a computer, you can get free access at your local library.

www.midlandstaichirehab.co.uk

<http://www.worldtaichiday.org/WTCQDHlthBenft.html>

<http://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/tai-chi-chi-kung-for-rehabilitation>



OSTEOARTHRITIS OF THE HIP (and Tai Chi)

Osteoarthritis of the hip and its resulting pain occurs when the cartilage cushion that separates the femur (this is the upper leg bone) and the hip socket becomes thin through "wear and tear", to the point when the bones almost touch each other. In fact in severe cases they rub together, which causes friction resulting in severe pain.

The factors leading up to this are: The head of the femur (the ball) starts out as a smooth sphere.

Most of us move legs in only one direction, forwards and backwards, as we walk, as we run, sit.

Because of this the bone scores along a single line, which in turn usually results in longitudinal grooving and tiny bumps and projections forming in the cartilage, which will eventually be the source of the pain experienced with normal movements as we get older.

It has been likened to the ruts we would make in a road if we always drove on the same area.

Once they are formed, it is difficult to get out of them.

Many sports where this happens continually, e.g. running, and similar sports where there are repetitive movements can accelerate this phenomenon.

Tai Chi is considered to ward of and help improve the existing condition.

Firstly by increasing the range of smooth round movements so hopefully less grooves will form, and for the people who have existing "ruts" and pain Tai Chi with its slow focused postures will prevent jolting and jarring and thus hopefully causing decrease in the inflammation in the joints affected by osteoarthritis.

Tai Chi incorporates both stretching and contraction elements into its exercises and because all the structural elements of the body, especially muscle and cartilage thrive on their normal usage, this means stretching as well as contraction, unloading as well as compression.

For the inter vertebral discs, menisci and cartilage lining the joints, this becomes critical since these tissues have virtually no blood supply of their own and must depend on the mechanical movements of the joints to circulate the interstitial fluids from which they derive their nutrients to maintain metabolic (healthy body running) health.

And don't forget when we practice Tai Chi slowly and rhythmically and the body and muscles relax the brain releases larger amounts of Endorphins which help pain and lift moods.



There are so many exercises that can help us to breath consciously.

Besides the 'in-out' exercise, we can recite these four lines silently as we breath:

*Breathing in, I calm my body
Breathing out, I smile.
Dwelling in the present moment
I know this is a wonderful moment!*

"Breathing in, I calm my body." Reciting this line is like drinking a glass of cool lemonade on a hot day - you can feel the coolness permeate your body. When I breathe in and recite this line, I actually feel my breath calming my body and mind.

"Breathing out, I smile." You know a smile can relax hundreds of muscles in your face. Wearing a smile on your face is a sign that you are master of yourself.

"Dwelling in the present moment." While I sit here, I don't think of anything else. I sit here and know exactly where I am. "I know this is a wonderful moment." It is a joy to sit, stable and at ease, and return to our breathing our smiling, our true nature. Our appointment with life is in the present moment.

Extract from 'Peace in every step'
by Thich Nhat Hanh

One supreme fact which I have discovered is that it is not willpower but imagination that creates. Imagination is the creative force. Imagination creates reality.

JOHN KEATS.