



# 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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Would you like to heal the world? How about those around you? How about yourself? It's simple.

Just smile. You, like most people are rightly sceptical that smiling can help heal the world, but let me see if I can help you to see the reality in this idea.

Please stay open minded and you will experience the truth of this concept.

Take a moment, sit up straight, and feel how you feel, your mood or emotion. Do it now.

Next, turn the corners of your mouth up slightly, a bit like a small smile, and see how you feel.

Then relax for a moment. Next turn the corners of your mouth down slightly, a bit like a pout, and see how you feel. Relax. Repeat this process, up relax, down, relax.

Did you feel any difference in the feelings that these movements produce?

I have shared this exercise with thousands of people, and the vast majority say they feel lighter in mood, happier, etc when the corners of the mouth are turned up, and feel the opposite when they are turned down. The words they use are usually down, heavy, depressed, unhappy, etc.

You see, it is only natural. When you are happy, up, etc, you smile and the reverse is true. That seems quite obvious.

What isn't so obvious is that you can take charge of your own emotions, and this concept of corners of the mouth can help. If you start to feel a bit down and you don't want to, just turn up the corners of your mouth and you will feel better. You now have the skill to help heal yourself.

Try another experiment. Next time you get an opportunity, smile at someone else. Believe me they will smile back. Now you have helped to heal those around you, as they will also feel better by smiling back.

They may even smile at other people they meet so you may be helping to heal the planet! Not a bad skill to have so close at hand. You also saving energy! Smiling uses 13 muscles while frowning uses 50. Michael Gilman

Now I have to tell you I tried this myself for a few days and it does work, people seem unable to resist smiling back. However I thought I must be a little selective as if I look too happy and the smile looks a little too manic I may get arrested lol.



The article below has been written by Irene, a student of my Northfield class. This is her tai-chi journey, so far.

I would like to add that I have seen quite an improvement in Irene's mobility since she first walked into the class on her walking frame and this is testament to her dedication, engagement and positive outlook.

Steve Taylor - Instructor Northfield class

### My Tai Chi Journey by Irene Clark

Friends suggested that I join their Tai Chi class. Apart from the fact that they thought I would enjoy it, they also thought it might help with my COPD.

So, one Friday afternoon in March 2017, I joined them at the local Baptist church hall. When Steve, the instructor, saw my walking frame he told me that if I became tired I should sit down. All the exercises could be done while seated.

We did some loosening up exercises, then Steve gave us each a medium sized blue ball. They seemed quite heavy, but I enjoyed the exercises we did. Then we were all told to sit down for our relaxation session. That was totally unexpected, but I thought it was a good idea.

I am a very tense and anxious person, so doing the relaxation really did help me to calm down. That night I had a lot of aches and pains from using muscles I didn't know I had. So I decided to do some of the warm up exercises at home – maybe ten or fifteen minutes twice a week.

The following week I was disappointed that the little blue balls weren't used. But I do enjoy the fact that each week the activities are slightly different.

I enjoy the classes so much that I want other people to come and enjoy them too. I have taken friends and family who were visiting me along to the class.

One thing I really enjoy about the class is the music. I am hard of hearing, so I haven't always heard birdsong, leaves rustling and water rippling along in a stream. I bought a CD of the music and use it to help me relax. I've been asked to get CD's for friends and family.

I use some of the techniques I've learned in class to make life easier for me every day. I used to get dressed when I was sitting on my bed. Now I get dressed standing by the side of my bed. I do have to sit down to put my socks on.

I think the great thing about Tai Chi is that you go at your own pace and do what you are comfortable with. No one is telling you that you should be quicker or to reach higher.

I do feel that I am able to move a bit more easily and maybe stretch a little further than I could.

I think I would enjoy any Tai Chi class, but I think I am really lucky to have a teacher like Steve. He creates a lovely relaxed atmosphere and enjoys good natured banter back and forth with the class.



**This gentle form of exercise can help maintain strength, flexibility, and balance, and could be the perfect activity for the rest of your life.**

Tai chi is often described as “meditation in motion,” but it might well be called “*medication* in motion.” There is growing evidence that this mind-body practice, which originated in China as a martial art, has value in treating or preventing many health problems. And you can get started even if you aren’t in top shape or the best of health.

In this low-impact, slow-motion exercise, you go without pausing through a series of motions named for animal actions — for example, “white crane spreads its wings” — or martial arts moves, such as “box both ears.” As you move, you breathe deeply and naturally, focusing your attention — as in some kinds of meditation — on your bodily sensations. Tai chi differs from other types of exercise in several respects. The movements are usually circular and never forced, the muscles are relaxed rather than tensed, the joints are not fully

extended or bent, and connective tissues are not stretched. Tai chi can be easily adapted for anyone, from the most fit to people confined to wheelchairs or recovering from surgery.

“A growing body of carefully conducted research is building a compelling case for tai chi as an adjunct to standard medical treatment for the prevention and rehabilitation of many conditions commonly associated with age,” says Peter M. Wayne, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and director of the Tai Chi and Mind-Body Research Program at Harvard Medical School’s Osher Research Center. An adjunct therapy is one that’s used together with primary medical treatments, either to address a disease itself or its primary symptoms, or, more generally, to improve a patient’s functioning and quality of life.

A tai chi class might include three parts: **Warm-up.** Easy motions, such as shoulder circles, turning the head from side to side, or rocking back and forth, help you to loosen your muscles and joints and focus on your breath and body.

**Instruction and practice of tai chi forms.** Short forms — forms are sets of movements — may include a dozen or fewer movements; long forms may include hundreds. Different styles require smaller or larger movements. A short form with smaller, slower movements is usually recommended at the beginning, especially if you’re older or not in good condition.

**Qigong (or chi kung).** Translated as “breath work” or “energy work,” this consists of a few minutes of gentle breathing sometimes combined with movement. The idea is to help relax the mind and mobilize the body’s energy. Qigong may be practiced standing, sitting, or lying down.

### **Getting started**

The benefits of tai chi are generally greatest if you begin before you develop a chronic illness or functional limitations. Tai chi is very safe, and no fancy equipment is needed, so it’s easy to get started. Here’s some advice for doing so:

**Don’t be intimidated by the language.** Names like Yang, Wu, and Cheng are given to various branches of tai chi, in honour of people who devised the sets of movements called forms. Certain programs emphasize the martial arts aspect of tai chi rather than its potential for healing and stress reduction. In some forms, you learn long sequences of movements, while others involve shorter series and more focus on breathing and meditation. The name is less important than finding an approach that matches your interests and needs.

**Check with your doctor .** If you have a limiting musculoskeletal problem or medical condition — or if you take medications that can make you dizzy or lightheaded — check with your doctor before starting tai chi. Given its excellent safety record, chances are that you’ll be encouraged to try it.

**Talk to the instructor.** Get recommendations from friends or clinicians, the Tai Chi Union and, of course, your own judgment. Look for an experienced teacher who will accommodate individual health concerns or levels of coordination and fitness.

**Dress comfortably.** Choose loose-fitting clothes that don’t restrict your range of motion. You can practice barefoot or in lightweight, comfortable, and flexible shoes. Tai chi shoes are available, but ones you find in your closet will probably work fine. You’ll need shoes that won’t slip and can provide enough support to help you balance, but have soles thin enough to allow you to feel the ground. Running shoes, designed to propel you forward, are usually unsuitable.

**Gauge your progress.** Most beginning programs and tai chi interventions tested in medical research last at least 12 weeks, with instruction once or twice a week and practice at home. By the end of that time, you should know whether you enjoy tai chi, and you may already notice positive physical and psychological changes.

Share your story as Irene has in the previous article, and encourage friends to join.