



Tai Chi Newsletter

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Finding Warmth and Balance: The Benefits of Tai Chi and Qigong in the Winter

As the colder months set in, many of us feel a natural urge to retreat indoors, slow down, and conserve energy. While rest is important, it's equally vital to keep our bodies moving and our minds centred. This is where Tai Chi and Qigong come into their own, offering a gentle yet powerful way to maintain health and vitality throughout the winter.

Boosting Circulation and Immunity

Winter often brings stiff joints, sluggish circulation, and the dreaded seasonal colds. The flowing, low-impact movements of Tai Chi and Qigong stimulate blood flow, gently warming the body from within. Regular practice also supports the immune system, helping us stay resilient against winter bugs.

Lifting Energy and Mood

The darker days can sometimes leave us feeling low or unmotivated. Tai Chi and Qigong emphasise breath, posture, and mindful awareness, which not only boost energy but also improve mood. Even 10–15 minutes of daily practice can reduce feelings of fatigue and bring a greater sense of calm and positivity.

Supporting Flexibility and Balance

Cold weather can make our muscles feel tight and our balance less steady, increasing the risk of slips and falls. Tai Chi and Qigong encourage gentle stretching and fluid weight shifts, improving stability, posture, and mobility—ideal for keeping confidence in icy conditions.

Nourishing the Inner Self

Winter in Chinese medicine is linked with the element of Water, a time for reflection, conservation of energy, and turning inward. Tai Chi and Qigong complement this seasonal rhythm beautifully, allowing us to move with greater awareness while cultivating stillness of mind.

Accessible Anywhere

One of the greatest strengths of these practices is their adaptability. Whether in the quiet of your living room, at a community hall, or outdoors wrapped up warmly, Tai Chi and Qigong need no equipment and can be tailored to every level of ability.

This winter, consider increasing your commitment to Tai Chi and Qigong practice. Not only will they help you stay warm and mobile, but they will also bring balance, calm, and resilience - qualities we all benefit from in the colder, darker months.



Zhan Zhuang (standing post)

After reading Mark's article on the benefits of standing (August Newsletter), it sparked my interest again. Mark asked me to share my experience.

I remember the evening I started my tai chi journey. The instructor told me that we would start with a short meditation. Chi Kung he called it. Great. Meditation was one of the things that interested me about tai chi. I had been meditating regularly for about 20 years. This was going to be interesting.

To my surprise he had us stand in lines facing him, (there were about 20 people in the class) I had always meditated sitting. I don't know how long we stood, (in 'wuji' I later discovered) but eventually he said: "Change," and everyone brought their hands up level with their chest. He adjusted my stance, palms upward.



I broke into a sweat. I could almost feel my pores opening. This had never happened to me before. This felt powerful. I was hooked.

It was three years before I discovered that chi kung (qigong) is an all embracing term that includes our standing practice – Zhan Zhuang.

Tai chi is an enigma. We talk about 'stillness in motion' and then about 'motion in stillness'. Don't tell your friends, they will think you are completely bonkers. Jan Diepersloot coined the term, Warriors of Stillness, as the title of his series of books which explore Zhan Zhuang. It seems to me; the term nicely defines a tai chi martial artist.

When we stand we sink down slightly, get into a sitting position, don't bend your knees, just sit. Externally we are completely still. Internally our energy is bubbling, we are anything but still. When we move, it changes. Our body goes forward but internally we are relaxed, soft: still!

Zhan Zhuang is the core training we use to develop our stillness. The practice will build a core strength though soft and relaxed. It will bring power to your form and martial practice (if that aspect is your thing).

I first learned tai chi at, what was then, the John Ding, International Academy of Tai Chi Chuan. (Now the Master Ding Academy). Master Ding has a system of teaching which includes Zhang Zhuang. There are many stances in the practice, but he has defined a system of seven which I still use both for my own practice and in my teaching. Basically, each hand position lines up with one of your energy centres (Tan Tien) and in so doing is supposed to activate it. When I was at the academy it was the answer to all your problems: struggling with the form 'more qigong'. Not feeling too good tonight? 'more qigong'. Worried about something? 'more qigong'.

You might think just standing is easy, especially compared to the complexities of the form – whichever style you practise. In fact it is hard. So hard that I have known students arrive late to avoid doing it!

But it is really the essence of tai chi. It will develop balance and strength. Especially in your legs but more importantly in your core. Also softness and especially relaxation, the two key principles that make tai chi what it is.

'Standing like a tree, still as a mountain lake,
Yet moving – leaves rustle on a summer's night,
Softly goes the warrior of stillness.'

John Roper – tai chi instructor – Bonsai Tai Chi, Essex

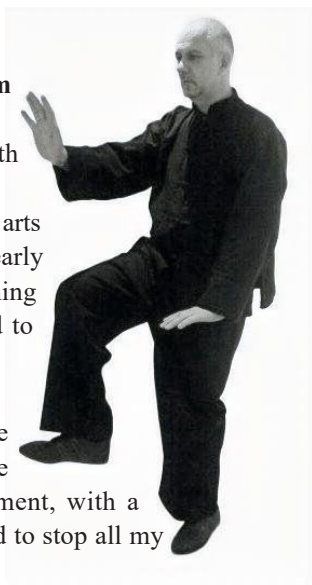


We ask students, friends, and fellow instructors to share their journey's and experiences of tai chi chuan and qigong. Below are a few submissions. Please do send yours to kaimingtaichi@outlook.com. A picture is always helpful too. Thank you in advance.

A Journey into tai chi – from external to internal

I would like to share my story with everyone if possible. I began my journey into the external arts like a lot of old timers in my very early teens. After 30+ years of hard training and hard knocks my joints started to pay the price.

I was diagnosed with severe osteoarthritis in both hips and spine and needed my first hip replacement, with a second replacement looming. I had to stop all my training.



As devastating as this was and during my rehabilitation I began searching a way to remain involved in the arts.

I found a local tai chi instructor with a similar background to myself who was teaching yang style tai chi and also sun style tai chi for health. I went along and there starts my journey into the internal arts. I was as very interested in the Sun style as I had never come across that style before, it was of a more upright stance and easier on my New artificial joints. I was familiar with Yang having been introduced to the yang style back in the 80s but I didn't persevere for long. I also began training with Linda Arksey who at the time was a master trainer with the Tai Chi for Health institute, I eventually went on to receive my instructor / teacher certificates and have continued to train in this style ever since.

I can confirm that tai chi has helped me to maintain a better level of health, both physically and mentally, a way of managing my pain and rebuilding my confidence. It's difficult for people to understand how, after years of being involved in something then it all being taken away, how it can affect you. I honestly believe without my own practice I would not be able to continue working.

I have been teaching since 2013 at my modest home studio which by the way I built myself with the help of good old YouTube. I continue to try and empower others to take up tai chi practice in a hope they too will feel the benefits. I know I will never be the master we all strive to be, but if by passing on my knowledge to new students it allows them to continue down the same path we have all chosen then I am one happy teacher.

Keep up the excellent work you do at Kai Ming as it inspires us all.

by Graham Snape - Doncaster Tai Chi for Health.



A journey into tai chi

Three years ago I walked into Wilnecote Parish Hall, Tamworth and asked if I could join the Tai Chi class there. Luckily for me they said yes.

So began my pathway to learning The Chen Man Ching 37 Form. I have found that it keeps me moving steady and feeling good. The slow gentle movements help my joints stay loose and my mind to stay clear. It's a great way to stay active at 73 without pushing too hard and it has become an essential part of my daily routine. It has allowed me to maintain flexibility, improve my balance and cultivate a sense of inner peace.

I do enjoy participating in group sessions which has introduced me to others who share similar goals of staying active and healthy.

As we age, the risk of falls increase, but Tai Chi's focus on weight shifting and controlled movements has allowed me to become more stable. I feel more confident moving through daily activities, knowing I am stronger and more responsive.

I have also been taught some of the martial applications, which I enjoy.

Thanks to the instructors, John, Lynne, Alyson and Dave.
by Richard Casey, Tamworth.



Student Feedback : Welshampton & Loppington Kaiming Groups - Caroline Gibson.

"What does Tai chi mean to you?"

"It is a weekly oasis in a troubled world. The slow, calming movements provide a performance that in itself introduces mindfulness and a sense of wellbeing".

"Learning a new discipline and improving both my posture and breathing and resulting in a more relaxed me. I enjoy learning new moves and putting them all together".

"Calmness, balance, controlled movement, memory improvement, strength, spatial awareness, mindfulness, happiness, thoughtfulness. Tai chi means all of the above for me in no particular order but all equally relevant!"

"Tai chi has many benefits for me. I have found the calm breath has helped my mental health by learning the tai chi moves, my concentration has improved. By stretching, my body feels more flexible, my legs are stronger which has helped my balance and I am more aware of my posture".

"Tai Chi is making me more aware of my mind and body. Slowly but surely allowing me to slow down and not be in such a rush all the time. This also allows me to concentrate on my breathing and pay more attention to it. I enjoy the social aspect and meeting nice like-minded people and having a good laugh. Thanks Caroline & Mandy!"

"I appreciate the articles in the Kaiming newsletters from Mark. Articles I have enjoyed have included 'Year of the Wood Snake', 'Practicing in the spring' and an article that explored the role of tai chi in supporting those with arthritis. Thanks Mark."

Word Cloud produced by the students, of the key words of tai chi and qigong for them:



Welshampton



Loppington (Quite a few were on hol hence smaller group!)



Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan Twenty-Character Motto

楊氏太極拳二十字口訣

(對上肢要求)

伸出肘尖；空出胳膊窩。

肘尖拽膀尖、連手腕帶手指。

"Extend the elbows outward; leave a hollow in the armpits. The elbows pull down the tops of the shoulders, connect the wrists and carry along the fingers."

When Yang Zhenduo explains this at a seminar, he usually does a move such as right ward off. He then takes his left index finger and points it at the inside of his right elbow. The finger points in the same direction as the right elbow. He then mimes using the finger to push the elbow outward, and seminar participants can actually observe the elbow moving outward and downward, maybe an inch or so (it's hard to quantify this but you can definitely see the elbow move outward).

You can see the right shoulder relax downward too as the elbow goes outward. He sometimes turns and points to show that the same movement has opened up a space under the armpit. It seems to me that the movement outward is a combination of relaxing the shoulder downward and opening up the shoulder and elbow joints, so that the upper arm seems to grow in length. In any case, it's just that easy. Anyone who practices tai chi can try it. When you do it correctly, there should be an immediate, noticeable sensation, which Yang Zhenduo describes in the essay. Try it!

The Twenty-Character Motto is very brief, yet its meaning is very profound and worth pursuing. Although only the various parts of the upper limbs are mentioned, following this motto can set in motion a chain of causality in which changes here

affect the other parts of the body. This connection is not just mental, but you can actually feel that precisely this movement of the upper limbs causes you to 'hold the chest in', which in turn induces 'pulling up the back', leading to 'relaxation of waist and hips' and ultimately bringing about '(movement proceeds) from feet to legs to waist', so 'all the joints are working interconnectedly as a whole'. You can get an internal sensation of the integration of all these principles and how they support each other.

The sense of energy created by this, and the sensation of the whole-body working together are things which every player must work toward and actually experience. This is crucial to successfully learning taiji. From this we can see that the Twenty-Character motto separately relates to every individual posture of taiji and as a whole determines the connected completion of the entire form. I hope that students will diligently seek to understand this and experience the 'sensation of energy' induced by this 'extend', 'hollow', 'pull down', and 'connect'. This will aid your overall level of training as well as the practice of connecting the internal and external.

Excerpt from Yang Zhenduo, Yang Shih Taiji, 1997
(Requirement for upper limbs). Translated by Jerry Karin

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Annual membership is still on £15 for new members and £10 renewal.

The £15 includes a club T-shirt.

T-shirts are available at £10
Hoodies £25



Our club charity calendar is now available



Stock is strictly limited so get your orders in now
The price is £6 for Kai Ming members, and £8 for non-members



It is a stand-up desk calendar measuring 20cm x 20cm (8 inches x 8 inches)

Advanced monthly training sessions.

Sessions are held each month for 3 hours at Weoley Hill Village Hall, Bournville, to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi chuan.

Sessions are Sunday's 9.30-12.30 at £35 per person

Oct 12th

Nov 16th

For your diary, 2026 Sunday session dates:

Feb 15th

March 15th

April 12th

May 10th

June 7th

July 5th

Aug 9th

September 13th – 9.30am to 4pm

Oct 11th

Nov 15th

