



Tai Chi Newsletter

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Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel

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Annual camp September

The weekend of 3rd & 4th September 2022 was our annual camp held at Weoley Hill Village Hall, Bournville. this year's theme was "Breathing life into your tai chi"

Saturday included tai chi form work in the morning - Breath, intention, and expansion. The afternoon focused on martial application without effort - sensitivity training, Sung, flow, and root.

Sunday people had the opportunity of learning tai chi qigong Shibashi set 8. We focused on the three refinements of mind, body, and breath. This was the first time set 8 has been taught in the UK and was really well received as it is both fun and challenging.

It was a great two days, with students and instructors both from within our club and outside attending. The weather was great too, and we spent most of the time outdoors.

This year's camp will be Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September so remember to book your place.



Dedicated student award

In the May newsletter we mentioned the sad loss of Andrew McAuley (Mac) who was a long-term student. Before he died he asked if we could start a Dedicated Student award as tai chi had given him so much in his life.

We asked in November and 4 names were put forward. Sarah proposed Linda Norbury (PtR). She has been attending PtR classes for a number of years, plus attended in the park in Lichfield. She has been learning tai chi and qigong, with real commitment, and all this with only 5% vision in one eye and is completely blind in her other eye.

Heather proposed John Cartmale and Steve Savage. I know them both from attending our annual camp and advanced monthly Sunday sessions. They have both been training with Kai Ming for many years, even assisting in class when needed.



Both Neil and I proposed Terry Lally who many will know from his regular attendance of the camps and Sunday classes. Terry attends Neil's weekly classes and has kept up his commitment and enthusiasm even with his severe health issue.



Instructors Journey

If you've ever thought of training to be an instructor in our association but maybe am unsure if you have the skills or ability, please attend our monthly Sunday advanced sessions, dates at the end of the newsletter. For now, please read the journey stories from two of our instructors, Ben, and Graham.

My Tai Chi journey by Ben Lee

I am an Instructor within Kai-Ming. I started learning Tai Chi when I was 23. I am now in my 40's. When I first started, Jenny Peters told me I only needed to pay half price for lessons because I looked under 16, if only I had retained those youthful looks!!!

My entire life has been a very strange journey of discovery and it has been mirrored in my Tai Chi.

Tai Chi has been immensely beneficial for me for reasons I will outline below. When I was 28 I was diagnosed with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and recently I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome (a type of Autism).

I slipped through the net of the educational system in the UK. No one picked up my difficulties at School or at University even though they were quite apparent. In my earlier years I frequently went to my teachers for help but in the best cases they were unable to help me and in the worst cases they made me stand in the corner of the classroom and not participate in lessons.

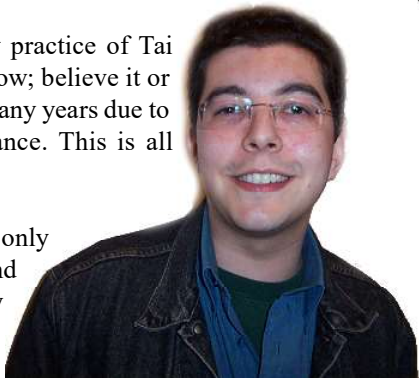
When I was a baby my parents thought I was deaf because of my lack of interaction with the world and other people around me. They were unable to get any help as there was not even the medical knowledge around at that time of my condition to reach a diagnosis, let alone give them help and advice.

I did not make eye contact with people, because after I made eye contact with the wrong person at University I was set upon by 9 youths. I was also frightened of the down escalators as they were constantly moving. I was always anxious in what I found a challenging situation. I certainly would not have thought I would be able to stand in front of a group of people and teach them Tai Chi as I do now.

My stoop has gone, I have a lot more confidence and My body movement is a lot better.

It is all down to my daily practice of Tai Chi. My shoes are size 8 now; believe it or not they were size 11 for many years due to my poor posture and balance. This is all thanks to Tai Chi.

As far as I know I am the only Qualified Tai Chi teacher and Accountant with my disabilities. Ultimately my journey has taught me that



disability only means an inability to do something a certain way; tai chi has taught me new ways.

It has helped me with my studies, It has relaxed me, it has got me through 3 nervous breakdowns, an Employment tribunal and two episodes of depression.

The Beginning

My mum had started attending Mark and Jenny's Tai Chi Class. I was looking for a martial art where a smaller person with good skill levels could defend themselves with confidence whatever the size or strength of the attacker. I wanted to feel safe when I was out and about. I came along and Mark demonstrated the soft power of tai chi (fa-jing) on me and sent me flying backwards.

That was when I started to get hooked. I wanted to learn how to do that. Kai Ming was able to offer me what I was looking for; everyone was warm and welcoming.

Middle

I carried on attending class for about 6 years. I went through all the stages that you go through in your form practice. There was an entire year when Mark had been saying 'Move your waist'. I tried it unsuccessfully and my form was really bad. It then turned out it was your 'Martial arts waist' which is actually

your hips. I went through a year under-stepping, then overstepping in my postures, sticking my bum out etc. I have stood in posture for many hours in my tai Chi career. I've been corrected many times by Mark. For some reason you hold a posture and all is well, you think you are doing OK. You look out of the corner of your eye to see where Mark is. He is checking another student.

What seem like hours pass and you continue trying to hold your posture. Your muscles give up slightly and that is the moment he chooses to come and look at you. And it's 'all wrong'. Then there is breathing correctly while doing the form. My form has changed so many times over the years as I've picked more things up and my hips loosen sufficiently to do the form more easily. I have also been to every Unstone Grange Tai Chi weekend since it started...

Starting to teach

Mark asked me to help in a class and throws me in at the deep end. I was one of those people who stood at the back of the class and never considered my Tai Chi anywhere near good enough to stand in front of people and teach them.

I arrived at the venue. There were over 40 people who had turned up. I had been told I was going to walk around helping any new students.

Instead I was called out to the front of the class and stood on a raised platform with all the new students looking at me as I demonstrated the form. It was a very daunting experience.

However It also made me practice my Tai Chi more in the following weeks.

I found that regular Tai Chi practice was beneficial to me. I made Tai Chi part of my daily routine which it still is now. I do the form twice a day and a Chi-Kung set every morning. I was awarded with the 'most dedicated student' award in 2005 as voted for by all the students and instructors of Kai Ming which was an honour. I also attained my junior instructorship. Since then I have gone on to achieve the status of full instructor and run my own class. It's been an amazing journey and I'm still on it so I hope you're looking forward to the next chapter.



The Path Took Many Turnings

I suppose me and my mates started fooling around with boxing age 12 because growing up in the 1950/60s there wasn't much around for our age group to burn off the excess energy we had and keep us out of trouble.

We only had one pair of gloves between us, so we had to be careful we did not use the hand without the glove or one of us (maybe both) could have been injured. (Now when doing push hands in my Tai Chi, thinking back to that time I remember how using only one hand made me very aware of what the other was doing, so I practice with one hand behind my back. It does increase your sensitivity and occasionally is a good exercise in awareness)

I enjoyed it so much I eventually got myself a paid paper round, so that I could enjoy the “luxury” of buying another set of gloves and use BOTH fists! However at this point I did not join an official Boxing Gym as I started attending the Birmingham Athletic Institute (BAI) where there were multiple-choice sports to choose from and I somehow became interested in weight lifting. Training four or five times a week I won several contests in the West Midlands becoming light heavy weight champion of the area, and was also chosen for the British Championship at Boreham Wood London.

I was at the BAI for around 5 years but then I found training four or five a week after work became too much but that was what the sport demanded if I wanted to stay at my best. They did have a boxing club there and my thoughts went back to the good times I had had in the old “one-glove” days. It rekindled my interest so I joined that. I trained with a coach called Tom Daniels and he taught me how to skip, and the art of footwork, always important for a boxer. I still remember he used to say to us when someone is hitting you, smile, so that it will appear it was not a problem for you!

After a couple of years I joined another club in Nechells, and received more advanced training. I had the luck to train with a few professionals there. I got married and then began working shifts so it became difficult to train as regularly. Also in my thirties, I suddenly developed epilepsy, and had to have many investigations and tests before they found the cause was related to a circulation problem that I had had since birth. Luckily, with medication, the fits could be controlled and I was able carry on as normal to all outward appearances. However, for some reason the very fact of having epilepsy made me feel a little isolated probably because of my own mistaken belief that the illness made me somehow less acceptable in society. I think this may have been true to a certain extent, before Epilepsy was understood and limited medications were available. However, I still needed to carry on with some kind of sport, and the need to be part of a group seemed to be my priority when looking around for this.

I had always been interested in Tai Chi, but never had time with all the other activities that were going on, to peruse it. Now I did. I looked around for a class that was within travelling distance (as I do not drive) found one and started going regularly. After a while, I decided I wanted to delve more deeply into the Martial side, and so started to travel to Manchester on a regular basis to train at weekends. I found I was having problems with the martial applications because of my boxing background, but I could not quite see why. Nigel Sutton, the head of the school I was training with at the time, said it was because I was TRYING to make something happen (as you do in boxing) the difference with Tai Chi is you DO NOT FORCE something, keep relaxed, practice the form diligently, and it

will happen on its own. I also trained with one of Nigel’s teachers, Master Lau Kim Hong, who also gave me lots of good advice especially about not forcing my breathing and relaxing the breathe more. He worked on just one of the forms at a time, repeating and repeating until we got it right. We practised Da Lou partner work (large rollback) with our wrists tied together; it helped by making us roll our elbows more and ultimately made them looser.

After some years, during which time I had become an instructor within the association, I found the direction of the club seemed to be getting too physical for me.



I wanted to do more relaxation whilst retaining the traditional flavour of the Martial element of Tai Chi. With this aim in mind I returned to my first teacher Mark Peters, who was now head of Kai Ming Association for Tai Chi Chuan and who had also trained with many of the Master’s I had met along my Tai Chi path. Through him and Kai Ming I have improved my knowledge of the importance of body alignment, and developed my understanding of effortless power, the element I had been looking for a long time. I spent 2 years training as an Instructor again within this Association and re-grading, as there were different aims within this club, and I knew it would help me achieve what I felt I needed.

I am now a Senior Instructor, and although it has been a long and winding path at times over the years, I now feel the journey was worth it. And as I have written down my story, I realise how my health has considerably improved along the way. I have found people who I feel comfortable with and speaking to many of them realise that all our paths had the same goal, improved health, better relaxation, and less anxiety of competition, and “fitting in”.

The bonus for me was Tai Chi also offers a good level of self-defence if you are patient and practice diligently.

At last, I am where I want to be.

By Graham Lambert

呼吸

hūxī

Breathing and the Mind

I always begin my Tai Chi practice with a deep exhalation, to remove the carbon dioxide from the lungs, clear away scattered thoughts from the mind.

A gentle inhalation takes place, awareness increases, fingers are energized, palms are raised upward and outward, until a Tai Chi posture is formed.

The mind is fully awake, and the lungs are filled with oxygen. When the lungs need to release carbon dioxide, exhalation naturally follows.

With a slow deflation of energy, the palms gradually fall downward and move inward.

Expel all wasted air and all anxious thoughts are reduced, my hips are relaxed again, and the posture is dissolved. There is plenty of room for incoming oxygen after slow and long inhalations. The slow-motion practice of Tai Chi Chuan gives us a sufficient supply of oxygen for all body cell needs.

When we are happy, we inhale, the upper torso straightens when we are cheerful.

When we are unhappy, we exhale and our body sags.

The mind, body and breathing interact together.

When the mind begins to think, we inhale. Mind and body energize each other as active thoughts cause mind and body movements.

These are natural interactions. Breathing regulates the thought and alertness of the mind. Inhalation will increase thoughts or awareness in the mind, and exhalation helps reduce the thoughts and awareness decreases.

The alertness and awareness pattern changes while a person is in deep sleep. When he takes in oxygen, it helps increase awareness or stimulate alertness, as we exhale, we are less aware and alert.

Therefore, breathing and awareness and physical movements correspond to each other.

Taken from –Breathing and Awareness of the Mind by William CC Chen.

Charity Donations

Each year we donate to a range of charities on behalf of Kai Ming. This year we chose:

Donkey Sanctuary
Guide dogs
Salvation Army
Happy Fields (local animal charity)
Fauna-Flora (Sunda pangolin's)
Bears Asia
Smile Train



CHARITY

If you have any charities you would like considered in the future, please let us know

Oh... to sit quietly

I would love to sit quietly, but the world is such a noisy place.

As I still my mind the world screams "listen to me"

As I strive for peace, the world nudges me
As I try to shut it all out, the world bags on the door.

Oh how I wish all could be quiet so I could just sit quietly
But as I do I realise the beauty of it all
The beauty of the flow of life...

Maybe if I stopped resisting life and flowed with it
I could enjoy the peace within the noise and just sit quietly



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 £30 per person.

Below are training dates for 2023

Feb 19th

March 5th

April 16th

May 7th

June 11th

July 9th

Aug 13th

Sept 2nd & 3rd – annual weekend camp – 9.30am to 4.00pm

October 8th

Nov 5th

