



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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fàng sōng

放松

To Relax

Recipe for Relaxation

- Take one stressed person
- Add some slow movements
- Mix in some calm breathing
- Add a pinch of quiet music
- Stir in a little mindfulness
- Then put together in a large hall.
- When finished allow to cool down
- Adjust quantities to taste.

Discovering Ch'i outside the class.

I have to admit that, for some time, I have been a little skeptical about the concept of gathering chi during warm up exercises and practicing the form. Recently however I was reading some anecdotes attributed to Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing where he talked of relaxing the body and mind in order to use Tai Chi martially or to be effective in push hands; in other words not trying so hard.

With this in mind I carried out a little experiment at home. I had the DIY task of removing some decking boards which had been in situ for 13 years and the screws fixing them to joists were pretty immovable. I'm no spring chicken and am not particularly muscular so was straining to budge some of these screws.

I had more success when I stopped constantly straining against the stubborn screws and applied the principles of Tai Chi instead. First, I positioned myself with my wrist, arm and shoulder in line

with and as an extension to the screwdriver; I then relaxed my mind and muscles whilst breathing deeply three times into the Tan Tien. Then, after another deep breath, I exhaled forcefully as I exerted downward and twisting pressure on the screwdriver turning the screw a fraction. By repeating this process I was able to free up the stubborn screws a fraction of a turn at a time.

Apparently Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing also talked about having faith in the art of Tai Chi Chuan and it maybe that I've experienced that whilst unscrewing some deck boards on a cold winter's day? Now I must remember to take that attitude into every class.

Rob Taylor - Little Aston Class



TAI CHI AND OTHER THINGS

Hello everybody, if you are reading this then you are probably in some way connected to Tai Chi, be it Instructor, Student or just have an interest in the art. We are always being asked for articles or contributions to the newsletter so I thought how about a slightly different slant on what is normally written. Let's try and get to know each other better.

The passion for Tai Chi is clear, but what else do you have a passion for (nothing to risqué please). Is it your family, a hobby, your job, I know from speaking to various people that lots of you are involved in interesting and diverse things, so why not share with us all what

it is and how you came to be involved in it. It doesn't matter if it's not related to Tai Chi, but if it is, then all the better.

More than 500 newsletters are issued every month and to me that means there at least 500 stories out there waiting to be told and shared with us all, which means if we had a monthly newsletter that equates to 42 years of stories. I am sure that Mark and Jenny would be very pleased to receive even half of that number.

I will start the ball rolling with my other main hobby, which is gardening. I find it relaxing and satisfying and sometimes even fascinating. The fact that you can plant a seed a mm in size, which turns into a plant (most of the time), which gives us lots of beautiful flowers or loads of vegetables – amazing. In our garden we have a greenhouse plus 4 raised beds where we grow potatoes, peas, beans, tomatoes, kale, carrots, parsnips, courgettes, lettuce, cucumber and peppers, to name a few. At this time of year it is very quiet on the growing scene, but it won't be long before it starts to get busy again.

A little bit like our Tai Chi journey, somebody plants a thought (the seed). You go along to the class, enjoy it, and someone sees the possibility of you doing better (feeding and nurturing) and going further (instructor training). Then it starts to grow from there with the help and love of the tai chi family, fellow students and instructors and after a lot of hard work and dedication (more watering and feeding) the flower appears – A new instructor. So what is your hobby or interest and how does it relate to your tai chi?

John Jenkins, Instructor, Tamworth

Tai Chi and the Five Integrities

Adapted from an article by

Kenneth van Sickle

The body uses several energies, pneumatic (breath), hydraulic (circulatory), mechanical (muscle & bone), and electromagnetic (nervous system).

Tai Chi, uses these energies in dynamic and subtle ways...

Tai Chi is energy management. Energy needs a channel, if the channel is blocked, the energy cannot flow.

The beginning Tai Chi student runs into tensions that stop energy flow, the master watches them do the form and notices these tensions, points them out to the student and suggests ways to slowly release them.

The first priority of the form is to relax, to get rid of tension.

First the gross energy blocks are handled - shoulder tension blocks energy to the arms, hip tension blocks energy to the knee, knee tension to the feet, stomach tension shallows the breath, these and other energy blocks prevent flow, like a kink in a hose.

Once a block goes away the energy flows through until it hits the next one to be worked on. This constant refinement is at the heart of tai chi development.

As the student progresses in the form, many things are being addressed simultaneously - alignment, centring, rooting, sensitivity, internal massage and martial awareness all come after the relaxation process has started; they are dependent on relaxation.

If, for example, the ankle is pronated (caved in toward the other foot) the knee and the hip will also be out of line. This might all manifest as lower back trouble. When the ankle is corrected the whole system will realign and that back trouble will be relieved. The Tai Chi form allows for this kind of healing.

The constant repetition of the form achieves many things. It gets the motor running. This generator develops "intrinsic energy". Internal exercise systems keep gaining energy, and can be continued into advanced age. Tai Chi and Yoga masters do not necessarily live longer than other people, but they are

almost always fit and vital up until their last hours.

Tai Chi forms have a very precise choreography. The Yang form as taught by Cheng Man-Ching, has 37 postures. Each follows in the same order every time the form is done, one move flows into the next at the same speed, without interruption. All the moves are always concerned with centring, alignment and balance.

"Lao Tsu" said that we "stiffen and harden" where as in youth we are "tender and pliable". Tai Chi is a way to replace that hardness with pliability.

In the Western world, and most of the Eastern one also, we are more and more into immediate gratification, "I WANT IT NOW", "WHERE CAN I BUY IT", "LIFE, MADE EASY". Tai chi doesn't lend itself to that attitude. Tai Chi is slow, gradual and thoughtful, precisely because that is what relaxes and vitalizes. Tai Chi doesn't "DO IT" for you, you do Tai Chi, and the more *you* do it, the more you benefit.

The form cannot be done simply mechanically, like let's say painting walls. It must be done with sensitivity and depth, like painting a portrait, and then it will develop deeply and permeate the rest of your life.

Push hands is a physical dialogue wherein the 'two partners' take turns trying to break down the very things the student has worked on all that time. In push hands you get to understand how the principles you learnt, while doing the form, do work. All you need to do is keep relaxed, aligned, centred, balanced, rooted and aware of the space you're working in. After you have gotten the basics of Push hands, and you no longer need to think about the moves, you begin to notice that you automatically/spontaneously do moves from the form. You 'discover' the self-defence application on your own. In this way you really get the idea—then practice.

Tai Chi Ditch Digging

Tai chi is energy efficient. Consider digging with a shovel - most of us who use a shovel push and stomp on it to get it into the ground, then bend and push it down to break the earth; use the strength of our backs to lift it and the muscles of

our arms to throw it. This of course, makes it back breaking work.

If you use the principles of Tai Chi, it works like this: You place the shovel's edge on the ground, step on it using your whole body weight on the handle (creating a lever), and break the earth out. You then reach down with the other hand and using your thighs (the largest muscle) lift straight up. Now take a step in the direction the shovel is pointing, the arms, if relaxed, will swing in that direction, then stop the shovel and the dirt will continue to its destination (momentum/inertia).

Here we have used gravity, leverage, inertia, momentum and the least amount of our muscular energy as possible.

The Ping Pong Ball

It is much harder to submerge a floating Ping Pong ball with the tip of one finger than it is to push a person. However, some parallels do exist. Its buoyancy is due to the fact that it contains air, (Chi). The sphere contains more, relative to its surface, than any other shape. Its ability to move quickly is due to its lightness (relaxation), and its ability to seek the surface so directly is due to its roundness (alignment).

The pushing finger must go in a straight line towards the ball's centre, as with the Tai Chi push, and the ball rotates towards the direction of least resistance like a good neutralization.

The Cup Returns

If you have ever tried to blow the dust out of a cup, you will recall that you were unpleasantly surprised to find that the dust blew right back in your face. The cup borrowed your energy and returned it to you. If you blew into the right side of the cup, the air went to the bottom, picked up the dust and returned from the left side. If you blew into the top, it returned from the lower side, etc. If you were advanced enough to blow into the very centre of the cup, the cup would become as advanced and return to you from all sides at once.

The feeling you get when you push someone, and they neutralize it with a simultaneous return, would be as if you threw a medicine ball, and the instant it left your fingers, it hit you in the back.

The Five Integritys

Relating to efficiency and reality in doing Tai Chi form and Push hands: personally, physically, morally, martially, and spiritually.

Personal Integrity

On a personal level, you must be true to yourself, in the beginning, when learning the form, do not compare yourself to others. Many students worry about not getting it fast enough, or appearing clumsy. These concerns show up as tension in the mind and the body.

People start out with many different abilities in memory, suppleness, tension and spatial awareness. All these seem to equalize themselves, and in the long run, it turns out that positive thinking, perseverance, and thoughtfulness, produce the best results.

Give yourself a break, learn at your speed, enjoy the experience, and lighten up!

Physical Integrity

Be heavy and rooted on the bottom, light and supple on top (roots and branches). Don't move the arms separately from the body, move as one unit, flowing and uninterrupted... No hollows or protrusions, weight down from the coccyx and up from the top of the head. Stretching the spine... Relax, relax, breathe, breathe, breathe.... How many times have we heard these and other principles of Tai Chi? How many times do we hear people saying: Why doesn't Tai Chi work? Or, why aren't I improving? Tai Chi isn't ballroom dancing or flying airplanes. If you forget a few basics of dancing you may look a little clumsy, or at worst step on a few toes. If you forget a few basics of aeronautics you might crash; Tai Chi falls somewhere in the middle. When you forget a few principles in Tai Chi, you are not doing Tai Chi; you're sailing in the mud, surfing in the soup. Link each movement to the next without pausing. Link each movement to the next without hesitation or change of speed.; find the natural swing and return.

Martial Integrity

Each move in the form has multiple martial functions. As you are doing the moves, make sure that these principles are kept in mind. If you are following the basic

principles of Tai Chi, you are practicing the martial aspect correctly, and at a certain point in your studies, you can begin to address this aspect more directly.

If you are working on the martial aspect, certain elements need particular attention paid to them. Imagine an opponent in front of you and begin to focus and issue energy to the centre of that opponent. Broaden your awareness of the space around you, and other energy sources. Pay particular attention to the substantial and to the insubstantial in relation to the issue of energy, and to the neutralization of force. Don't get caught up in the dance. Keep your spontaneity and flexibility at all times. Don't anticipate or plan moves ahead of time, be mindful, be in the moment.

Always remain aware and sensitive, spontaneous and flexible.

Moral Integrity

It is possible to study Tai Chi for a while, learn many techniques, use many or most of the principles and use strength to become very good at Pushing hands. Usually, people who do this, have winning as their highest priority. Two things, at least, result from this condition: One is that the practitioner never reaches the highest level. And the other is that this person's relative success tends to impress others and invalidate the true principles of Tai Chi. It takes a lot of faith to continue to lose day after day to people you know you can beat if you use your strength; to invest in loss.

Many of the female Tai Chi players I have talked to, have expressed a fear to really try and push the males. They say the men get upset and push them back very hard. This is male ego in one of its nastier manifestations. You would think that every Tai Chi player would be happy to see a validation of the principle of the weak overcoming the strong. Yet, when it happens, most of the strong men become children.

We must take care of our partners in Push hands. Its purpose is to learn, teach, practice; not win, the winning is in the learning.

If you are winning at pushing because of double weighting, bracing the legs etc., this will not translate into fighting. Tai

Chi doesn't work in the horse stance. At close quarters it leaves one vulnerable. You can push someone if that's all you want to do. By abandoning all your defensive integrity to get the push, will not reach the highest levels.

Spiritual Integrity

At some point, you may want to explore meditation in movement. You cannot meditate while you are thinking outside of the moment you are in.

It helps to do the form slowly. It may seem too difficult to take an hour to do your form, so just start by doing the form at a speed that would take an hour if you did it all. Stop when you must, but that way you will begin to get the feeling, and perhaps you'll find yourself going farther than you thought.

Listen to your breath.

A freely falling body doesn't feel the effect of gravity. A standing body feels the effect of gravity as it resists it. A force can only be received if it is resisted. A body that is tense, is stiff and static. A body that is relaxed, is free and flexible. When a fist meets a small part of a large body that is free, resilient and flexible (meets no resistance), it causes no damage.

Be FREE to flow and feel.



This was sent in by Clive Bennett who some of you may know, and other may only know as Perry's Dad.

Whoever produces these Masterpieces must have a lot of time on their hands or else they are employed in a large office where nobody can see what they are up to.

Questions to ponder:

1. If poison expires, is it more poisonous or is it no longer poisonous?
2. Which letter is silent in the word "Scent," the S or the C?
3. Do twins ever realise that one of them is unplanned?
4. Why is the letter W, in English, called double U? Shouldn't it be called double V?
5. Maybe oxygen is slowly killing you and It just takes 75-100 years to fully work.
6. Every time you clean something, you just make something else dirty.

7. The word “swims” upside-down is still “swims”.

8. 100 years ago everyone owned a horse and only the rich had cars. Today everyone has cars and only the rich own horses.

Confusions still unresolved:

1. At a movie theatre, which arm rest is yours?
2. If people evolve from monkeys, why are monkeys still around?
3. Why is there a ‘D’ in fridge, but not in refrigerator?
4. Who knew what time it was when the first clock was made?

Vagaries of English Language!

Ever wonder why the word funeral starts with FUN?

Why isn't a Fireman called a Water-man? How come Lipstick doesn't do what it says?

If money doesn't grow on trees, how come Banks have Branches?

If a Vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a Humanitarian eat?

How do you get off a non-stop Flight? Why are goods sent by ship called CARGO and those sent by truck SHIPMENT?

Why do we put cups in the dishwasher and the dishes in the Cupboard?

Why do doctors ‘practice’ medicine? Are they having to practice at the cost of the patients?

Why is it called ‘Rush Hour’ when traffic moves at its slowest then?

How come Noses run and Feet smell?

Why do they call it a TV ‘set’ when there is only one?

What are you vacating when you go on a vacation?

Did you know that if you replace “W” with “T” in “What, Where and When”, you get the answer to each of them?



BEGINNERS CORNER

‘What’s in a name?’

In our Kai Ming Newsletters Mark includes interesting articles from himself and other teachers/masters. These articles can be quite technical and, from feedback from newer students, can

sometimes go a bit over their heads. (I always advise them to re-read in the future when they have more experience). With this in mind, I approached Mark with the idea that I write a ‘Beginners Corner’ section to help new students understand our art and also act as a refresher for more experienced students/instructors.

So, we will start with the name of our art: A while ago while watching The Chase quiz show, a woman contestant said her hobby does Tai Chi and, luckily for her, one of the questions with three possible answers was ‘what does Taijiquan translate to in English’? A perfect question for her you would have thought - unfortunately she got it wrong!! Now you may scoff and think she did not know her own hobby very well but as you will see Chinese translation gets very complicated.



First let’s look at how Chinese language and translation work.

The Chinese language is based on ideograms i.e. visual symbols representing words rather than sounds, these then have to be converted to roman (Latin) letters - Romanisation. To complicate it more there have been two main translation systems, the older Wade-Giles and the modern Pinyin which is used now in China. This is why you see different spellings of Tai Chi Chaun (Wade-Giles) or Taijiquan (Pinyin). If we then add in apostrophes as some do, we get t'ai-chi, t'ai chi ch'uan and variations..... phew!!

So, let’s break down Tai Chi Chuan or Taijiquan and find its meaning:

- Tai - Supreme, Grand, or Great
- Chi or ji - Ultimate, Extreme
- Chuan or quan - Fist, Palm, or Boxing

Therefore a general translation would be ‘Supremes Ultimate Fist’.

These days lots of people shorten the name and drop the last part Chaun/quan but that means they are losing the martial aspect of the art. At Kai Ming we do not do this because when you know the martial applications of your form, it will make more sense even if you are only practicing for health/relaxation reasons.

So finally let’s look at how we pronounce both versions Tai Chi Chuan or Taijiquan well, actually, it is exactly the same ‘tie jee chwenn’. Try not to pronounce the last part as ‘Kwon’.

Now, in the event that you are ever on a TV quiz show, you will have more knowledge of the art of Taijiquan and if you win big money, 10% to me in a brown envelope will suffice.

Neil Rankine - Senior Instructor



DON’S QUICK SNACK
A snack for lover’s of Marmite.

- 2 Eggs
1 level tablespoon of butter or half butter/
half olive oil
Half teaspoon of Marmite

Boil eggs to your liking
Meanwhile put other ingredients in a bowl and melt by using a microwave oven, or other method of choice.
When eggs are ready scoop out and put in bowl with butter and marmite mix.
Break up eggs and mix to your liking

I like it served with toast or bread and butter.



Advanced classes / instructor training

Venue: Weoley Hill Village Hall, Weoley Hill, Bournville.

Sunday: 9.30-12.30 advanced classes (£30)

Dec. 8th - includes grading

2020 dates

JApril 19th

May 10th

PLEASE NOTE:
Please send your Newsletter contributions for future issues to markpeters@kaiming.co.uk