



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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Fun, Stress, and Teddy Bears.

No, I have not finally lost it! Just been reminiscing (must have too much time on my hands.

Recently I was fetching something out of the room I have a French day bed in, which is used for my teddy bear collection. It started with my own bear Edward (who has pride of place) I have had him since I was 5 years old, and he has now got a few old friends keeping him company!

For some reason I looked across at them and thought teddies always have such a smiley comforting face, you can tell them anything when you are a child and they always keep secrets, always smile at you, and you feel better straight away.

I think they absorb all the positive attitudes to life we have when we are young, plus the energy and the fun and laughter. Now to the point - Why do many of us lose the fun as we get a bit older (30 is old to some so don't feel judged!!!!)

When I occasionally hear that a Tai Chi student in a class has complained that it's too hard or too noisy or people are laughing and joking too much it reminds me of a quote from a Cheng Man Ching book, plus something I read.

"Mount Tai could collapse in front of us and a deer suddenly appear on our right, but our complexion would not change or even an eye blink" in Cheng Man Ching's Advanced Tai Chi Form Instructions. Laughter is no less than a collapsing mountain surely so find your inner stillness.

I feel this says even more, so I thought I would share it with you. All we seem to do is talk about how much stress we have in our lives, but why doesn't anyone seem to talk about how much FUN they're having? I've never heard a single person say, "I'm such a mess; I had TOO MUCH fun today"

Of course not, because that is a completely illogical statement. FUN cancels out stress; it roots us in the moment.

In RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY - A THERAPISTS GUIDE, Albert Ellis wrote, *"we disturb ourselves"*

Consider this - We take something relatively easy to cope with and make it into a crisis. e.g. "it's raining, we're going to get really wet, my hair will be a mess, I'll have to have another

shower, even though I had one before I came out, and now I will be late cooking dinner, and the dog will have to wait for his walk and he will be running around demented, probably knock one of the kids over, did I replace the plasters in the first aid cabinet, best stop off at the chemist and get some more in case!!!!!!

Now I'll miss the bus and be even later picking my children up from school, getting to an important meeting, or even heaven forbid, be late arriving at my Tai Chi class!!!!

People come to Tai Chi for many reasons, but over the years, I feel it has become clear that when we formed Kai Ming, and later Painting the Rainbow, we wanted students to leave their class feeling not just relaxed, but re-energized; calmer and more able to deal with the 'everyday' stresses of life and we have hopefully achieved that.

We wanted the classes to make Tai Chi both FUN and relaxing, so that if you arrive there having had a "bad" day or the journey to class was a little like the scenario above you can, for an hour at least, unwind.

Learning is also improved if you can create a relaxed atmosphere whilst practising with others.

I totally understand that some people may find it hard to concentrate if there is too much hilarity going on, but there is a balance to be struck and we trust our instructors to keep this balance, which I know they do.

We are a traditional club and we take Tai Chi and Qigong seriously but one of the dictionary definitions of seriously is "solemn, considered manner". Well, we do practice the art in a considered manner, but solemn? I hope not.

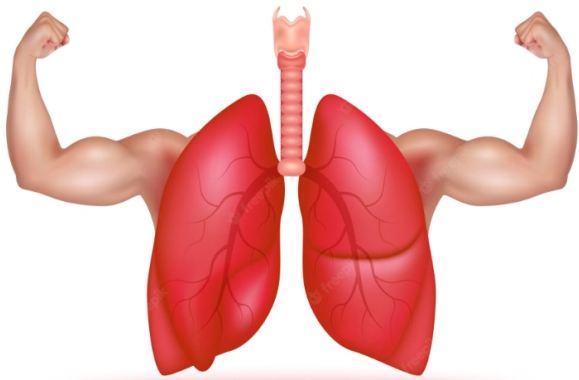
We do not want the club to become too solemn or lose the lighter side of the Tai Chi dance.

We need to bring back the fun of learning, the calm after a stormy day can be created from a light atmosphere in your weekly Tai Chi class.

Please let us know what you would like from your classes to make the event more special; we are always looking to improve your experience, which in turn improves ours!

by Jenny Peters

The Three Exercises for heart and respiratory health



Whatever your respiratory or circulatory condition is, it will improve and your symptoms ease by exercising regularly. You can also stave off things getting worse. The exercise you choose is important as is the level you work at whilst doing them

Aerobic —Moving arms and legs which contain some of the largest muscles in your body, until you are slightly out of breath and warm, e.g. swimming, walking, cycling.

Benefits of Aerobic exercises is, improving circulation, improve emotional well-being and as a bonus it may improve how well you sleep.

It can lower your risks of heart disease and circulatory diseases, or if you already have them, it can stop them getting worse, as it lowers your resting blood pressure and heart rate.

It is recommended 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity; this means you feel warm and comfortably breathless. If new to exercise start at 5 minutes a day and build up gradually.

If you already have any heart or circulatory disease you may need to adapt how you exercise and must always check with your GP or hospital consultant before you start any at home or at a recognized class.

Strength Exercises. —These are designed to make your muscles work harder. Also known as Resistance training. These can be done with weights, or resistance bands/cables. You can start these at home by simply moving from sitting to standing. Or maybe get some baked bean or similar cans out of your cupboard and hold them while you raise and lift your arms from the elbow and then above your head. You will be strengthening the muscles and gradually it will improve circulation to the heart, and you may find everyday tasks leave you less breathless and tired.

Try these exercises 2 to 3 days a week leaving a day in between and only do 10 to 12 repetitions each day you are exercising for strength.

Flexibility and Balance Exercises.

Flexibility exercises are to be done when your muscles are warm, that is why warmups in classes are so important.

Balance exercises are when we move into a position that is less stable and get our body to hold the position. If you need to you can start by holding on to a chair or kitchen work surface while you lift your leg forward and hold it there, then relax and repeat, until you gradually feel more stable. Flexibility exercises make sure muscles don't get too tight. You can move more easily and avoid pain and injury. Balance exercises can also reduce your risk of falls.

Try to do balance and flexibility exercises two or three days a week. Ease into a position where you feel a comfortable tightness, but it shouldn't feel painful to hold the stretch. Try to hold muscle stretches for at least 30 seconds, you can do this by counting to 30 Slowly. (don't hold your breath while counting) Note==People on high blood pressure medication should move slowly when standing up from a sitting position and always move slowly out of a different position to avoid blood pressure drop and dizziness.

You need to do these exercises on a regular basis to develop muscle memory.

Tai Chi includes most or all these exercises within its form. Even the relatively new research that has proven the aerobic benefits are equivalent to a Zumba class !!!! See Dr Michael Moseley's Trust me I'm a Doctor TV program (s6:e8) discussing research on this and featuring our club. You can see the video at <https://vimeo.com/766812422>



Life is like a beef and mustard sandwich.

You can nibble your way delicately through it at a slow and steady pace, or you can occasionally take big bites and suddenly get a mustard "hit" where you go "WOW that was hot but the beef seemed so much tastier".

When you finish, and the heat goes, you have a lasting feeling of satisfaction that stays with you for a while.

If you only nibble you may not even notice the sandwich has gone!

I hope I have never been a nibbler in life...!

Festive versions and Vegan versions also available.

Tai Chi from the ground up – part 2

Your “root” is already there for you. You don’t have to “learn” how to get it — just stop fighting gravity!

Attributed to Cheng Man Ching

Part 1 in the April newsletter explains key structural aspects of tai chi and should be practiced in a stationary position before working with the principles of movement described next.

There are lots of discussions, be they poetic, on the use of bows in the body or ‘seek the straight within the curve’ or rotate ‘like a wheel’ but how do they apply to body movement for health and martial application. You have all most likely heard that Tai Chi movements are circular rather than linear, but why, when others tell us that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. We could expand the statement to say ‘the straightest line of least resistance’ which could be another way of saying ‘seek the straight within the curve’.

We have all heard the saying ‘stuck in a rut’ or seen the evidence that going backwards and forwards over the same spot wears it out quickly, but have you ever considered linear movement of the joints can have the same effect. It can wear away the cartilage cushion separating the joints, which eventually leads to osteoarthritis. Once formed, ruts are very difficult to get out of, plus they limit the mobility and life of the joints. Tai Chi’s smooth rounded movements work joints through their full range thereby aiding mobility and removing the risk of grooves forming.

In addition to this, linear movements allow direct force to be applied risking impact shock back to you as well as giving your opponent a point of reference. Imagine catching a cricket ball, it has a direction and velocity which, if you position yourself in its path to catch it, it will hurt. An experienced catcher will follow the trajectory and either slow the ball for a catch or redirect it back, through a curved path, to another player. This is the redirection of force as applied in Tai Chi Chuan. By keeping the joints soft (not locked) curves are naturally formed which can be springy (pung) and act as the body’s natural shock absorbers.

Now your body is soft and springy, you have allowed gravity to act on you and align with it, your joints are loose and free etc. everything is wonderful, but what happens when you lift one leg off the floor? Can you still apply the same principles? Do you still apply the same principles? The answer should be an emphatic *YES!* To repeat a statement I made earlier, “Practicing slowly allows you to pay attention to every little detail of every aspect of every movement”, in addition to this it now allows you to pay attention to what is happening throughout your body and how you relate to the gravitational pull acting on you.

I also mentioned three stages to movement, the third stage now is not just to turn the waist but also to lift the leg to its new position. Nigel Sutton always told me “When applying kicks, always keep three legs on the ground” by which he meant one of your legs and the two of your opponent; this is to ensure a stable foundation, but what do you do when there is nobody to hang onto? The same principles apply whether you are raising your leg to move to a new position or a single leg posture: know your centre and move from it, keep your hips level and balanced, do not raise your hip/body when you raise the limb, ensure body unity etc.

By seeking stillness in movement, as we are told, the true essence of ‘Tai Chi for self-defence’ comes into play i.e., we can defend against the wear-and-tear of our daily life, improving our well-being for now and the future.

We have built the body from the ground up like a series of blocks, not rigid blocks, but blocks that are allowed to naturally compress under the load of those above and achieve natural alignment. The elastic cord is a means of supporting or suspending (to allow you to hang down) to prevent misalignment.

As stated, we do not have to create this rooted alignment it is already there if we could but see. Once you can *give up* to the idea, ‘invest in loss’ as Cheng was fond of saying, your development in the art of Tai Chi Chuan goes beyond the superficial ‘feel good’ shapes and is allowed to become a *real* method of martial and health development.

Isador Rabi (Nobel prize winner in physics) said, “*Life is too short to spend your time doing something because someone else said it was important. You must feel the thing yourself...*”

Enjoy the experimentation and do not accept everything at face value. Do not just go through the motions because all around you are, because the shapes and methods are familiar and safe, strive for the essence of the art and to the true understanding of the nature of things. Relax, align, and move.

By Mark Peters



Qigong - Get Started.

The development of Qigong in China has been a very long and slow process.

Over a period of maybe three or four thousand years it has been gradually refined and technically adapted by practitioners who have learned from experience and guidance's of others, that the art can now be used as a wonderful aid to maintaining good health, physically and mentally throughout life.

It has also developed so well that it is a great add on to people who are already suffering from an established chronic disease and using prescription medication.

The belief in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is that chronic illness is the result of "damage to the Severn Emotions". In terms of Western medicine, these are stress-related diseases

It can help lift mood, help anxiety, increase oxygen intake by improving lung capacity thus aiding circulation and generally help give a feeling of well-being.

In ancient times it was known as Dao Yin (which roughly can be translated as gymnastics). Tu Na (breath control) and Yang Sheng (body building).

Qigong has a long history of association with religious life in China, and the tradition suffered parallel divisions.

On the medical side, several distinct schools arose-Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, and Wushu, along with a good many local styles stressing different technical variants etc.

All these styles are also found among China's minority peoples, and it has often been through these practitioners that Qigong methods and traditions have become established abroad, especially for instance in Japan. But now it has spread so far into Western society that it is gaining as much popularity as tai chi.

Qigong has strongly influenced the development of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and indeed the impact has been reciprocal, in the present era, and especially since the seventies, the body of knowledge has undergone further refinement and its principles have been extended, not only in China where it originated, but also among an ever increasing worldwide body of experts, so that it has become a new kind of "science of well-being".

Qigong IS NOT A QUICK FIX it requires patient and diligent practice.

Below is an idea of what you can achieve health wise if like most things in life you are prepared to wait awhile

QIGONG timescale for improvement—

WITHIN 3 MONTHS—A general loosening up of the body and gradual feeling of improved well-being.

Shoulders and neck muscles relax off, and if you are prone to headaches these should lessen.

You may notice your back muscles, that have been tight and painful at times, (maybe through injury) now feel that they are beginning to be troublesome less often.



WITHIN 6 MONTHS—

You will suddenly be aware, because of the subtle, soothing, and exact movements of your daily practice, any aches and pains that were caused by bad posture will now be improving or gone.

1 YEAR—

You may experience less colds and viral infections, (there is evidence from research that practice of Tai Chi (which is a Qigong) boosts the immune system substantially.

Headaches vary rare or not at all.

Stamina has increased, and you will cope with the usual stresses and strains of life much more ease.

Sleep improves and you will feel more rested and refreshed when you start the day.

You start to sense muscular tension at its onset and are able to consciously relax the parts of the body concerned.

There are many people who will attest to the general improvement in their health that they have experienced since becoming serious daily practitioners of this ancient art.

However, as you all know "the proof of the pudding is in the eating".

Even if you can only fit in 10 minutes before or after work, or maybe during a lunch break, get started.



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.

Sessions are Sunday's 9.30-12.30 at £30 per person.

Below are training dates for 2022 and 2023. Sunday 4th December 2022 is cancelled

Dates and times 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

