



# 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*

call: 0121 251 6172

e-mail us: [markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:markpeters@kaiming.co.uk)



### Tai Chi in the Park continues to grow

Wow... its hard to believe how the program has taken of since its inception at the Cotteridge Festival in 2012. Emma Woolf had an amazing idea and ran with it. The idea built through Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) and has gone city wide with some 50+ parks planned for this year alone. Jessica Ennis even came to one of the launch events and tried out a tai chi.

Coca-Cola has agreed to fund and support the project to 2020 along with Sports England and Public Health. This means we can provide tai chi classes for FREE at parks citywide making it truly accessible to anyone who can access these open spaces.

The current list of park tai chi classes can be seen at

[www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk/tai-chi-in-the-park.html](http://www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk/tai-chi-in-the-park.html)

and the list continues to grow.

The aim of Painting the Rainbow has always been and continues to be **to make tai chi and chi-kung accessible to everyone regardless of age or ability**; 'Park Tai Chi' is part of this program. We continue to provide classes in-doors and to develop our links with local support groups, AgeUK, Alzheimer's Society, Stroke Association, Health Trainers and more. We continue to need to expand our growing pool of instructors and volunteers so please let us know if you are interested in being involved.

### TAI CHI - "Medication in Motion"

The above title was taken from a Harvard Medical Health Publication in May 2009. It focused on three components contained within practice of this art.

**1. Movement** - Slow and fluid movements improve the body's alignment, posture, strength, flexibility, co-ordination, balance, and stamina. Some of these are consistent with many other forms of low impact exercise; the added benefit of Tai Chi is the focus on improved posture, balance and alignment.

**2. Breathing** - Focused and rhythmical breathing puts emphasis on relaxing the body therefore encouraging good circulation. Increase of intake of oxygen to the body's cells, improving brain function, and proficient working of organs and muscle.

### 3. Meditation/State of Mind

A meditative state of mind (focused) during practice of the movements and breathing will help to dissipate stress and anxiety, also pain caused by psychological and emotional factors.

A study of 200 people in their 70s found that 15 weeks of Tai Chi reduced risk of falling by 50%...!

Participants of regular sessions of Tai Chi demonstrated an increase in lung capacity, disappearance (or great improvement), of backaches, neck aches, and those with raised blood pressure where told by their GP that it had improved by varying degrees with the individual. All participants noticed an increase in energy levels in their daily life and work.

Information taken from The Hawaiian Medical Journal.

Research from UCLA documents Tai Chi practitioners enjoyed a 50% increase in immune system resistance to viral infections.

More tai chi research can be found on the NHS website <http://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/tai-chi-chi-kung-for-rehabilitation> and includes evidenced research into the effects on tai chi and aging, falls prevention, cardiac rehabilitation, Pulmonary rehabilitation (COPD) and so much more.



### Inner Peace: This is so true

If you can start the day without caffeine,  
If you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,  
If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,  
If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,  
If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time,  
If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,  
If you can conquer tension without medical help,  
If you can relax without alcohol,  
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,

Then You Are Probably...

The Family Dog!



Sit quietly,  
Do nothing,  
Spring comes,  
And the grass grows by itself

Zen saying

## Trying to Avoid My Destiny

We are led, aren't we?  
Even if we are at the time unaware.

Little did I realize when my husband finally found a fairly local Tai Chi class, that my life was about to change. Not a miraculous transformation. Not immediate enlightenment. But a slow dawning.

My usual defensive excuses about my arthritic knee joints and 'bad back' weren't accepted and I was persuaded to "come along and try for myself".

I don't mind telling you it was almost impossible to coax seized up knees to just gently and lightly bounce. But I was made to feel relaxed enough and welcome enough to only do as much as was comfortable - which I have to say was very little to begin with.

Since when has exercise been this easy? No goals. No time limits. No competition. Even better, no jarring of joints, no stress and NO PAIN. I had always thought it was 'no pain, no gain'. Wrong. With Tai Chi I found it was no pain, everything to gain.

I began to see that Tai Chi's gentle movements strengthened my leg muscles, taking the strain off my knee joints, therefore allowing greater mobility and flexibility. It also promotes correct posture which removed any strain from my lower back. I have recently been encouraged to hear my osteopath recommending Tai Chi.

### I Hope Nobody's Watching !

Perhaps at this point I ought to say how I really felt when my husband and I first joined. Embarrassed - comes to mind. Not so much because I didn't achieve a great deal in the first few weeks, but more so the fact that our teacher was so genuinely enthusiastic about a series of movements which quite frankly looked ridiculous. They seemed to be so easy and I couldn't imagine how they were going to 'exercise' my body. I was relieved to be in an enclosed hall with no

onlookers. How on earth were these small movements going to be of benefit to me? I'd always seen keep-fit enthusiasts putting so much effort into their chosen sporting pursuits and now faced with a young man effortlessly drifting around the room spouting about the health giving properties of Tai Chi, I was hard pushed not to laugh. I think an apology is long overdue.

Little did I know that I had been led to an all encompassing holistic art form which has, over the years, gently revealed itself to me to be not just an aerobic, no-impact relaxing discipline, but also a means of balancing the body's physical and mental energies and of becoming a spiritually uplifting even prayerful experience.

### Tai Chi Practitioners Do It In The Park!

If I can overcome myself consciousness and join Alan in the park, Tai Chi in the morning or evening underneath the old trees is very rejuvenating. Amusing also when we are joined by the occasional teenager who is determined to try out his very vocal Bruce Lee impersonation. There have been times when we've lost track of time and been locked in the park at dusk. I can just imagine the local headlines!

### We're All Individuals

We're all unique, and as such come to Tai Chi with our own unique reasons and expectations. Some come because it is a Martial Art, others seek relaxation and some like me, hoping to find a gentle form of exercise. But just as we are taught that if you have joined a class for relaxation you will also learn the martial aspects and improve your body's efficiency, and similarly if you have come solely for the martial training you may be surprised to find you're learning how to relax and improve your health as a bonus - I definitely found far more than I ever expected.

Yes my knees are so much better that people disbelieve that I ever had a problem with them. But there's so much more I don't know where to start. It was a while before I realized that Tai Chi had

improved my circulatory system and I no longer suffered leg cramps during the night - something I'd inherited from both parents and experienced since childhood. I now stand naturally with my knees directly above my feet as opposed to being slightly knock-kneed, again an inherited problem which must be why my family are predisposed to arthritic knees. And also linked with this are dropped arches which I now find have disappeared because I automatically bear my weight correctly. My driving is far more laid-back as find I have a calmer and more forgiving nature, not bad for someone renowned for her quick temper. I find half an hour of Tai Chi calms the mind, energises the body and lifts the spirits. Perfect at the end of a stressful day.

I have to come clean and admit that on more than one occasion my commitment has waived. Twice following surgery and also after the death of my very closest friend, Len, I stayed away from classes for many months at a time, but somehow I knew it was O.K. to begin again. And yes, each time I stopped my knees seized up again and the leg cramps returned. But it's comforting to know that you won't be judged, just welcomed back to class and allowed the space and time to develop.

*By Maureen Daniels*



### **The art of relaxation**

Picture yourself near a stream. Birds are softly chirping in the crisp, cool, mountain air. No one knows your secret place. You are in total seclusion from that hectic place called "the world". The soothing sound of a gentle waterfall fills the air with a cascade of serenity. The water is clear and you can easily make out the face of the person you're holding under the water. There now.....feeling better?