



Tai Chi Newsletter

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Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel

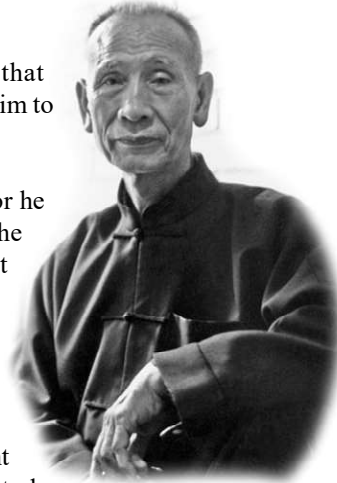
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Passing On The Art

Mr. Liu (Liu Shih-Heng) said that Professor Cheng once called for him to come over to his home.

When he arrived, through the door he could see the Professor doing the exercise we know as “Constant Bear” (i.e., shifting and closing the kua on the loaded side with suspended head-top) as he worked with a manuscript.



Professor continued the movement without speaking. Mr. Liu waited patiently and observed, feeling sure that Professor had noticed his arrival.

Finally, Professor Cheng looked up at Mr. Liu and said, “This single movement is Tai Chi Chuan. Everything is contained in this.” This exchange was the inspiration for Mr. Liu’s basic exercises.

The “five animals” exercises grew out of Mr. Liu’s meditations on some notes left by Professor Cheng (perhaps related to Hua To’s ancient Five Animals exercise) and passed along after his death by Madame Cheng to Mr. Liu. The five are: dragon, tiger, bear, monkey, and bird. The nature of these movements (coiling/curved, pouncing/linear, etc.) correspond to certain postures (obviously we could describe differences in the movements and functions of the postures), but the principles are the same. “Return to the One.”

For more info see Robert W. Smith’s “Martial Musings” (he has a whole chapter on Mr. Liu), also Cheng Man-ching’s “An Explanation of the Constant Bear” from master of 5 excellences We listen to someone playing a piece of music composed by a great musician, maybe from long ago. We may have heard the same piece many times played by many different people, and what we hear is THEIR interpretation of the same melody.

Sometimes it may seem that it is totally different tune and that is because this is how the person performing it has changed or adjusted the basic notes to suit their style or maybe even find it easier for them to connect to the rhythm. See the similarity with Tai Chi?

Masters have passed on the art over and over again down the years and their students have all received the foundations of what will eventually become THEIR interpretation of the same principles.



I asked MASTER TANG CHING NGEЕ of Singapore, when he was staying with us some years ago, “If someone because of some disability cannot perform some of the postures as they are taught, or maybe a posture in the form causes discomfort even practised correctly, will it affect the benefits they receive from Tai Chi?”

He replied that as long as the basic principles were followed and their body felt more comfortable with the posture performed to their limitations, or adaptations, it would make no difference. It is better to do what you can easily than to feel stressed forcing a posture because you feel you have to.

Your instructor is there to help you interpret the music of Tai Chi.....

The rhythm that flows through your body is yours!



For what Purpose?

The aim of Kai Ming is to encourage and develop a love for the exploration and practice of Tai Chi Chuan as expounded by Cheng Man Ching. He strove for the essence of the art, not to mimic others; he practiced out of love, not ego. He encouraged the development of those around him without holding back.

With this in mind, I came across the quote below which I hope touch you as they did me.

“Even though our path is completely different from the warrior arts of the past, it is not necessary to abandon totally the old ways. Absorb venerable traditions into this new Art by clothing them with fresh garments, and build on the classic styles to create better forms”.

(how good is that!)

Taken from THE ART OF PEACE

by Jenny Peters

The Importance Of The Five Loosening Exercises From Master Huang Sheng Shyan.

By Master Willie Lim

As exponents of the 37, from the Lineage of GM Cheng Man-Ching, the form needs to be looked at with an acute eye. Many an exponent thinks that learning the form means they are on the way there??! On the way there but how far ahead. little do people realise that within the 37 moves are hidden the 108.

Where I am often asked? I change and mould as I move along the form that must be refined and refined. How do I go about this? Master Huang has left us the five loosening exercises that with proper execution of them, and knowing where they fit into the form, we can refine the form and move ahead in the 37.

What do the loosening exercises involve? The Chinese translation is "Hue-Shou" meaning throwing hands, hence you get lead astray if you interpret as such. "Throwing hand" is just a simple phrase to describe the refinement that must go into the exercises when you perform them.

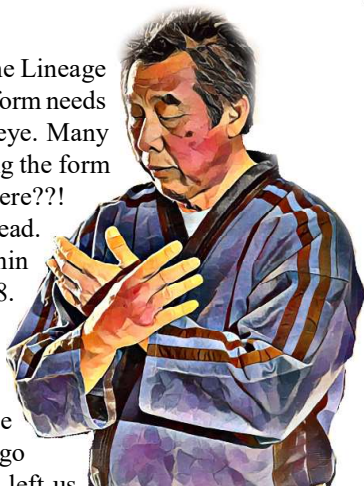
The best way to understand how these exercise are performed is to look at two different analogies. Take rhythmic gymnastics where the girl plays with the ribbon; that is Tai chi at its best. The line you have to remember here is the girl never moves the ribbon.

The next analogy is the weightlifter cleaning the weight. What is common here? Both are identical muscle activities. How do you relate one to the other and where are they the same? The same sequential motion of the muscles are in play. This is what you have to look for when training the 5 loosening exercises, so they in turn fit into the 37 and refine the form. I believe today that without understanding these exercise one cannot develop "ting jing" or listening energy. Differentiate the straight from the curve, full and empty, connect and disconnect, torque and compression. These are some of the principals that are involved.

Take the rotation exercise or No.1 - What is involved? How do you differentiate the straight from the curve here? When is one arm full and the other empty. Does the body and the arm move at the same time? What are the joints that have to be lined up when one sits into one side? How is the arm 'brought' up and how it is let 'down'. Do I really move the arm? When does the caving of the body come in? Do I really cave in or do a "counter rotation cave in" (sink the chest, pluck the back). Where does the compression and the torque come in? There is more and more I could go on.....

This is how you have to look at the loosening exercise and in turn fit them in to your form to really move on. Tai chi is based on simple principles that have to be honed into the body. It is never easy because it needs time and guidance from someone who is ahead of you to guide you along that path.

Just look at master Huang on YouTube. Look at other tai chi Masters. Do they even ever come close to him? For your



information master Huang is the one who taught the founder of Goju karate.

Tai chi is a journey which is full of twist and turn. It is not as many think, collecting forms, while that has its place as well. Be critical of every small change and enjoy the journey, because it is a lifetime's work moulded into the 37.

The importance of Dong-Dang (swing-return)

Dong-Dang is a concept at the core of Cheng Man Ching's tai chi chuan; it is the process that creates a loose momentum when practicing tai chi

It is interesting to analyse the two words in Chinese character. "Dong" is formed by two characters: weight and force, pronounced in Mandarin, zhong liy which means in English "gravity", functioned by the pull of the earth.

"Dang" consists of two words, "soup" in the "bowl"; the soup symbolizes flexibility like water. While the soup in the bowl in your hand is in motion, you can feel the gravity and the water soup swinging freely and at will. It is easy to feel the outside object in your hand, but hard to feel one's inside with this sign if one can't be relaxed, and soft and can't feel one's own hanging weight.

Master Cheng's New Method of Tai chi Chuan Self-Cultivation", translator Mark Hennessy refers to this as to "momentate." Page XI: "Every movement, according to Cheng, produces momentum. And the true secret to a smooth-flowing tai chi form is to redirect momentum back to movement - which produces more movement and momentum." This brings the question of form speed to mind... Practicing slowly is beneficial for many reasons but slowly is a word open to your own interpretation. Natural sits better for me as it allows changes in speed to suit the feel and flow of each of us as individuals and implies no speed fast or slow.

Play with the idea and play with your form to see what this brings out for you...

Here is a video by Robert Chuckrow to help demonstrate dong-dang in tai chi chuan <https://shorturl.at/hsvG6>



My tai chi journey, so far

Lynne and John asked if I would like to write a short piece about my Tai Chi journey, (but I am not very good at putting words on paper) so here it is... gave up work, found a Tai Chi class, started January 2022, the end!!

Definitely not the end, it is just the very beginning. I was learning about warm-up moves and the form which had some strange names like roll-back, push hands, and ward-off left !!!! It felt like a foreign language and a bit daunting with trying to

remember where my hands and feet were meant to be and getting to know the name of the move, but the more I did Tai Chi the more I fell in love with it and it must have shown as Lynne and John asked if I would like to train to become a Junior Instructor. I know I haven't even scratched the surface yet with what I need to learn but I am excited to see where this lifelong journey takes me.

After attending my first training session on a Sunday with Mark I felt very overwhelmed, especially after talking to some of the Instructors and finding out how long they had been doing Tai Chi, 25 years, 15 years, 30 years .. wow ... and then there is me 10 months into my journey at the time. I am now at 22 months, still very much a beginner.

For some months now I have been leading the class in the warm-up at both the Monday classes and teaching the form to the new members. I find it very interesting how people can be so different and to find out what brought them to Tai Chi. Some come for gentle exercise, some have complex medical conditions and are finding Tai Chi helps, some come for the social side to meet and make new friends but whatever the reason is that has brought them to Tai Chi is a good one.

I am due to take a grading soon and I am very nervous. I am fine doing the warm-up and form in the class but put me in an "exam" situation and my poor little pea brain just goes to mush. Fingers crossed I can somehow manage to get through it without making too much of a fool of myself so I can move onto the next path of my journey.

I can't thank Lynne and John enough for believing in me and for the help from the other instructors at the monthly training, it really is appreciated. Mark, thank you for sharing all your valuable knowledge and experience, the only part I don't enjoy is getting up early on a Sunday, even though it is only once a month to be at training, but once I am there and have woken up, I really enjoy it.

Happy Tai Chi'ing

By Alyson Ashmore – Tamworth



The Inner Game

When the mind is free of any thought or judgement, it is still and acts like a perfect mirror. Then and only then can we know things as they are.

Timothy Gallway.

I remember being told many years ago that it takes at least 20 years to master tai chi, and I guess they meant have a reasonable understanding of because mastery is such a subjective term. But why should it take any longer than any other martial art or any other skill for that matter? Nigel Sutton always said the only secret was practice and I would only add to this by saying mindful practice. For me this is the Inner Game as discussed by Timothy Gallway in his great book.

I became interested in NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) after Jenny mentioned it in connection to management of change but I never realised where it would lead.....

I started learning NLP for work and found new perspectives on my tai chi training. The description given by its co-developer Richard Bandler is 'the study of the structure of subjective experience' and at the core of it is 'the map is not the territory' or 'the word is not the thing', Alfred Korzybski. What this all means is that we map our experiences and measure against them so are constantly making unconscious judgements/decisions, some good some not. I mention all this because it seems what has made Tai Chi more difficult to grasp, beyond the basic shapes, is you have to get your head out of the way, to suspend reality for a moment and just experience the experience as it unfolds. Sounds a bit heavy I know but then reality is not real, the map is not the territory remember. Have you ever seen the Wizard of Oz? (the original version not the remake); near the end when they're all in front of the great wizard asking for courage, a heart, a brain etc. they notice something and the wizards said "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain". The whole story is a great metaphor for what I am discussing because the man behind the curtain is your unconscious mind, pulling the strings, doing all the work.

I hope I haven't bored you and that I still have your attention because luckily there is a solution and that is called mindful practice or as Tim Gallway said "when the mind is still". Even the tai chi classis state "Only motion attained through stillness may be called Tai Chi". But here is the dilemma, how to practice stillness without being still because tai chi is an art of feel and flow... A phrase I like is 'you're only limited by your own creativity' or to paraphrase NLP 'you're only limited by your own map limits'. I have found dropping the names of things (remember the word is not the thing) and making games up to develop your own experience of things can be both fun and shorten the learning cycle. Once you realise the old adage "if you keep at it, you'll get it in the end" needs a rethink because if you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting what you've always got. I know, I know.... I'm starting to sound like a range of t-shirt quotes but hey, they can be helpful!

Anyway, back to it... Diligent practice, mindful practice, reflective practice is what makes the difference and so tai chi should only take as long as it takes to quiet disbelief. Be clear on what you want from it, have a well-formed outcome, and train with that in mind. And remember the best part is the journey – your classes and your own practice. Quiet the chatter and enjoy the inner game.

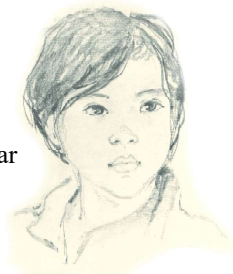
By Mark Peters



A story for Christmas..

By Colonel John Mansur.

Taken from the reader's digest



Whatever their planned target, the mortar rounds landed in an orphanage run by a missionary group in the small Vietnamese village. The missionaries and one or two children were killed outright, and several more children were wounded, including one young girl about 8 years old.

People from the village asked for medical help from a neighbouring town that had radio contact with the American forces. Finally, a US doctor and nurse arrived with only their medical kits. They established the girl was the most critically injured. Without quick action, she would die of shock and loss of blood. A transfusion was imperative, and a donor with a matching blood type was required. A quick test showed that neither American had the correct type, but several of the uninjured orphans did.

The doctors spoke some pigeon Vietnamese and the nurse a smattering of French,. Using that combination, together with much impromptu sign language, they tried to explain to their young, frightened audience that unless they could replace some of the girls lost blood, she would certainly die. Then they asked if anyone would be willing to give blood. The request was met with wide-eyed silence. After several long moments, a small hand rose slowly and waveringly went up, dropped back down, and then went up again. "Oh thank you", the nurse said in French, "what is your name?" "Heng", came the reply. Heng was quickly laid on a pallet, his arm swabbed with alcohol, and a needle inserted in his vein.

Through this ordeal Heng lay stiff and silent. After a moment, he let out a shuddering sob, quickly covering his face with his free hand. "is it hurting, Heng?" the doctor asked. Heng shook his head, but after a few moments another sob escaped, and once more he tried to cover up his crying. Again the doctor asked him if the needle hurt and again Heng shook his head. But now his occasional sobs gave way to a steady, silent crying, his eyes screwed tightly shut, his fist in his mouth to stifle his sobs.

The medical team became concerned. Something was obviously very wrong. At this point, a Vietnamese nurse arrived to help. Seeing the little ones distress, she spoke to him rapidly in Vietnamese listened to his reply and answered him in a soothing voice. After a moment, the patient stopped crying and looked questioning at the Vietnamese nurse. When she nodded, a look of great relief spread over his face.

Glancing up, the nurse said quietly to the Americans, "he thought he was dying. He misunderstood you. He thought you had asked him to give all his blood so the little girl could live". "but why would he be willing to do that?" asked the navy nurse. The Vietnamese nurse repeated the question to the little boy, who answered simply, "she's my friend" Greater love hath no man than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends.

Five Principles of Tai Chi Chuan Skills

Mr Benjamin Lo of San Francisco.

Five basic principles for the development of good Tai Chi skills are:

- 1) Relaxation.
- 2) Separating Ying from Yang.
- 3) Turning the waist.
- 4) Keeping the body upright.
- 5) Maintaining the hand like a beautiful lady's hand.

"People always say to me [Ben Lo], 'You always emphasize relaxation. But how do I do it?' I say, 'Do the form.' That is the only way. A lot of people ask me: 'Do you have any special posture that can help me relax?' I say yes. They ask, 'What?' I say: 'Do the form.'"

Of the five principles, the first one, relaxation, is the most difficult, he said. The other four, he said, everyone can do. "You don't even have to know Tai Chi Chuan to do them perfectly. The problem is that when you put them together, you cannot do it, especially when your legs start burning, aching, shaking and you forget about all the principles. A lot of people are like this."

"Everybody thinks that they are relaxed, but when they meet somebody better than them, they become hard. So we cannot be perfect. It is a lifetime challenge. We just keep doing and doing, refining and refining. Just the basic things."



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.

What3words locatoin <https://w3w.co/pits.level.cake>

Training in 2024 starts with

- 18th Feb
- 17th March
- 14th April
- 12th May
- 9th June
- 7th July
- 11th August
- 6th October
- 10th November



Weekend camp – 9.30am to 4pm
7th & 8th September