



# Tai Chi Newsletter

<https://www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk>  
<https://www.kaiming.co.uk>



**Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone**

*Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel*

call: 0121 251 6172

<https://www.taichinewsletters.co.uk> e-mail us: [markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:markpeters@kaiming.co.uk)



## Resist Not

Have you ever noticed that resistance leads to persistence? And behind all resistance is self-created fear. The only way to relax and stay relaxed is acceptance. You do not have to agree, or follow, or condone, but acceptance means you begin any interaction with a serenity, which invites others to engage with you. And out of engagement comes the satisfaction of creative expression and an enriching relationship.

That's relaxation in action!

What stage are you at right now?

Maybe you have heard of the four stages of learning, or maybe not but here goes

1. Unconsciously incompetent (you don't know you can't do it)
2. Consciously incompetent (you know you can't do it)
3. Consciously competent (you know you can do it)
4. Unconsciously competent (you just do it)

Well tai chi also has stages of application, each of which going through the above four.

1. Brute force and ignorance - where you are stiff and tense and MAKE it work
2. A spark of belief - where you start to trust a little but still resist in the end
3. A willingness to 'invest in loss' and hope for an outcome that is enough to keep you on track
4. Amazement when things actually seem to work, most of the time
5. Belief in the magic and wonder as it all really begins to fall in place.

Now we all go through these stages and in the end, it is trust in tai chi plus the honesty and openness of your instructor that helps you keep moving forwards. Everything in the art you have ever seen (real that is not BS) can be achieved by everyone with hard work; just think back to when you came to your first class and how daunting it all seemed. Still the gentle

effectiveness of the art amazes me and keeps my interest alive. The subtle changes and feelings as we progress naturally through the levels, slipping back occasionally, make this a real journey. My teacher, Willie Lim, likened it to a plateau that becomes ever more clearly in view as we climb the path. The traditional Chinese term is 'to eat bitter' which translates as the willingness to practice when it seems pointless, to keep working even when you believe you are making no progress, to believe in the eventual benefits even when it goes against your old beliefs. Luckily, the journey is not a bitter or tasteless one with the support of a good teacher, and classmates, and to catch sight now and then of the wonder of tai chi keeps our interest alive.

My aim is not to put you off or even to sound like a cult but just to convey the commitment; you have already been making, and the frustrations we all feel from time to time. Remember there is no magic but the arts itself and we can all achieve it, enjoying each stage of learning.

Kai Ming means open minded, and it is our intention to offer an open minded approach, encouraging questioning, to enable us all to learn. Living in each moment and acting mindfully in our practice ensure we can all see tai chi for what it is and all enjoy the experience. Maybe you want to learn to defend yourself, improve your health & well-being, relax or even eventually teach tai chi as you have gained so much yourself. What you will realise is that as you naturally work through the stages all is possible; whenever we fail it is because we want to jump ahead and have not patience. Patience is the key - rushing at it will not get you there any faster and will only frustrate. Relax, enjoy and before you know it you will have moved forwards. Maybe you have been stuck in traffic, rushing to get somewhere and realising you're getting nowhere fast; maybe you've even noticed others rushing in the traffic and come to the realisation that rushing at it doesn't get you there faster, it only gets you there more stressed...

Know there are natural stages, know you [like me] are only human, and know that your teacher is being honest when they say you will get it in the end.... Sit back and relax. Tai Chi means supreme ultimate, it does not mean mediocre or make do, so surely it is worth the extra effort.



## A friend's Legacy

Some of you may remember Andrew Mcauley (Mac). He's been an on-off student for nearly twenty years, and won the fancy dress competition at our weekend camp in Unstone Grange 2008. See the September 2021 newsletter for details.

He came back last year and attended park sessions. He was very open about his mental health struggles and I always enjoyed talking and training with him. He told me how Tai Chi had enhanced his sometimes difficult path in life, and how he had always found his way back to Kaiming. It was a complete shock when he was suddenly diagnosed with terminal cancer last year, and he passed away after a short time in palliative care. But one of his last wishes was to introduce a **'dedicated student award'** in his name and he donated a framed picture of the Chinese symbol for energy (chi) that was given to him when he won the competition all those years ago; it meant a lot to him and was pride of place at his home when he lived in Thailand and the UK. Each December we will ask for nominations for the award.



## Thoughts for the Beginner

When new students attend their first class, many have no real thoughts of what to expect.

Most people have some idea about what Karate, Aikido, Taekwondo, Judo etc. will bring to them, as these Martial Arts have higher exposure in the Media as a general rule.

Probably like me, they have seen footage of Chinese practitioners slowly performing lovely flowing movements, and the accompanying commentary has explained its great health benefits.

It was so impressive that we thought, "I think I'll have some of that!"

Well 20 years on the Tai Chi path has confirmed to me that it was very good decision.

However, it has not always been a smooth ride; there have been times when I felt like walking away.

Times of frustration.

Times of lack of faith in my own abilities when I just thought, "I'll never remember all these moves".

Times when I have thought is the "Pot of Gold" at the end worth the journey!

Now I can answer this YES IT IS!

But for the beginner the task may seem too much, far too long and it would be easier to walk away than persevere.

Some people seem in search of what you might call 'a spiritual supermarket' hoping to pick from the shelves what they fancy but not knowing what they really want. Maybe a clearer shopping list would have been helpful so informed decisions could be made. If you want to discover what tai chi really has to offer you need to give it time and commit to it, to keep drilling. There is an old saying "In a really dry place you have a better chance of finding water by drilling one hole 200 feet deep than 10 holes at 20 feet deep". You must stick with it

The few points below may help the novice student become the advanced practitioner and realise that where there is the will there is a way.

Not many of us are as self-disciplined as we would like, and this may create a problem, as the best way to retain information is repetition. Being able to retain the movements of the Tai Chi form is dependent on regular practice; even if ten minutes a day is all you can fit in, plus your weekly class, it will go a long way to help.

Focus on the basic principles of the form, understand why you are moving this way, and do not let the movements be just "copycat".

Never be afraid to ask questions, a good teacher will welcome them and can put right in a few minutes something you may have been struggling with for a while.

After all Tai Chi should alleviate stress, not create it.

Remember this—the student next to you in the beginner's class who seems to have a grasp of what they are doing and looks so good when you are struggling, is probably thinking the same thing about you!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



## A few thoughts to ponder

Middle Age is——

When you choose your cereal for the fibre, not the toy.

When we can do just as much as ever, but would rather not.

When a narrow waist and a broad mind begin to change places.

## Yang Style Tai Chi Twenty-Character Motto

- Excerpt from Yang Zhenduo, Yang Shih Taiji, 1997

### 楊氏太極拳二十字口訣

(楊上誠著)

伸出肘尖；空出胳肢窩。  
肘尖拽膀尖、連手腕帶手指。

*“Extend the elbows outward; leave a hollow in the armpits. The elbows pull down the tops of the shoulders, connect the wrists and carry along the fingers.”*

The Twenty-Character Motto is very brief, yet its meaning is very profound and worth pursuing.

Although only the various parts of the upper limbs are mentioned, following this motto can set in motion a chain of causality in which changes here affect the other parts of the body. This connection is not just mental, but you can actually feel that precisely this movement of the upper limbs causes you to ‘hold the chest in’, which in turn induces ‘pulling up the back’, leading to ‘relaxation of waist and hips’ and ultimately bringing about ‘(movement proceeds) from feet to legs to waist’, so ‘all the joints are working interconnected as a whole’.

You can get an internal sensation of the integration of all these principles and how they support each other.

The sense of energy created by this, and the sensation of the whole-body working together are things which every player must work toward and actually experience. This is crucial to successfully learning tai chi. From this we can see that the Twenty-Character motto separately relates to every individual posture of tai chi and as a whole determines the connected completion of the entire form.

I hope that students will diligently seek to understand this and experience the ‘sensation of energy’ induced by this ‘extend’, ‘hollow’, ‘pull down’, and ‘connect’. This will aid your overall level of training as well as the practice of connecting the internal and external



## Dance to the Beat of Tai Chi

Just before Christmas, a few years ago, I used some tai chi principles in real life for the first time. I’m happy to say it was in the gentlest of ways.

I went with my friends to see The Beat – the pop reggae band from the early 1980s (remember Mirror In the Bathroom?), who are still working, and are one of the best dance bands in the world. I designed their logos, record sleeves, and t-shirts, so obviously I have a certain preference... but we were all set for a great night out at Birmingham Town Hall. We got into the venue early and staked out a place we were going to be able

to see the band without being right up front, and we chose well, because as the place filled up, our space seemed to be kept open.



The Beat came on, the place erupted, and we were having a great time. Then, a great lummock of a bloke staggered right in front of us. He was having a good time, but he was drunk and big. I wasn’t having his, but I didn’t want to push him away and ruin his evening and mine. So, I moved up to him and danced tai chi next to him. And of course, he found himself gently and mysteriously moved aside.

Just as he began to register that something was going on, I changed my balance and was no longer a threat to him, then when he was settled, I changed weight again, a sort of gentle “step up and play guitar” and he moved again... and so it went on, all in time to the bouncing ska/ reggae of The Beat. The guy was gently moved to another part of the floor, without even realizing it.

My friends, standing behind me, watched all this and said it was quite obvious to them what I was doing, and how the guy hadn’t stood a chance – hadn’t even realized there was a contest going on. Tai Chi principles of Softness proved themselves on that night.

Love and Peace, Bredren!

By Hunt Emerson



## 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.

### 2022 dates

May 8th

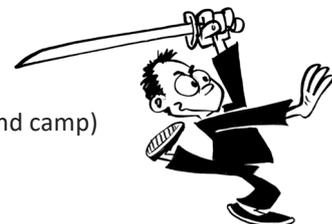
June 12th

September 3rd & 4th (weekend camp)

Oct 9th

Nov. 20th

Dec. 4th



### World tai chi & qigong day Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April

It had been a good few years since we last held any events to celebrate **World tai chi & qigong day** so we felt this year was the year to step up. So many have suffered the effects of COVID, not least the loss of social interaction, so decided to run sessions outdoors and the Gods were on our side as it was a beautiful sunny Saturday.

We ran events in Cotteridge Park, Birmingham; Beacon Park, Lichfield; and Tamworth Castle grounds, Tamworth. With a great turn out at all. People were able to take part both seated and standing, meaning everyone got to experience the benefits and enjoyment of tai chi and qigong. I'd like to thank Heather, John and Lynne for organising the events in Lichfield and Tamworth

The events included a mix of tai chi and qigong 'join in' sessions, and demonstrations.

It was truly heartening to see so many people joining in and enjoying the events. More photos and videos can be seen at our **Tai Chi in The Park** Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/parktaichi>

Below are a few photos, memories of the day.



Tai Chi form practice in Cotteridge Park



There is always somebody. The rest of us are doing qigong



A great group practicing qigong in Lichfield



Bit of qigong in Tamworth Castle grounds

#### PLEASE NOTE:

Please send your Newsletter contributions for future issues to [markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:markpeters@kaiming.co.uk)

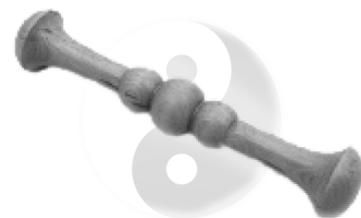
### CIMSPA national standards for Tai Chi & Qigong

Sometimes it's hard to believe this long hard project has been five years in the making. A development committee was originally set up with members from CIMSPA, TCUGB and others with special interest and knowledge. I led this, as the Chairman of the TCUGB.

The aim being to develop national standards for tai chi and qigong in the health and wellbeing sectors; not the whole arts but specific aspects to help the aging population and patients with chronic conditions. The purpose being to improve quality control and delivery in these specific sectors that had long suffered with lack of understanding of what tai chi and qigong are, as well as knowing who to work with and training courses to attend.

The standards will be officially issued in May 2022.

More details to follow...



#### Are you interested in qigong workshops?

I am running 3-hour sessions live on zoom on

Thursdays 1-4pm for £30

January was Ba Duan Jin, March Yang Family Qigong.

Both were well attended and feedback great.

**Next session will be**

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May – Tai Chi Ruler**

emailed [Markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:Markpeters@kaiming.co.uk) for details