



## Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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### Learn tai chi and enjoy the trip

Some years ago a landmark study was published in an American Journal of the Medical Association that showed Tai Chi Chuan to be twice as effective as other exercises in the prevention of falls among the elderly.

This preventative power was thought to be due to the development of better balance. There is a lot of effort in the form spent standing on one leg and shifting weight slowly and purposefully back and forth from one leg to the other.

There are five elements we believe that are contributing factors in balance, these are: eye-sight, (or vision), the vestibular system (or balance organs) within the ear that send messages to the brain about changes in the position of the head, leg strength, awareness of the body's centre of gravity, and proprioception. All of these elements are included in Tai Chi practice in one form or another but it was found you do not need to have all five working perfectly to improve balance using Tai Chi.

So what was the factor found during the study that was thought to influence improvement the most? It was Proprioception. This is the ability of proprioceptors, special receptor cells found in the joints and tendons, muscles and skin, that process information about

the body's orientation as it moves through space. Simply put, proprioception is muscle sense.

Dr Oliver Sacks wrote a book entitled "The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat"; in one essay within the book he described a patient who had totally lost her sense of proprioception. She had no idea of where her body was. If she closed her eyes, she would fall down. She was able to move her arms and legs only by vigorous use of her eyes, compensating for her loss. Even then, she did not "feel" her body. Maybe this is why Tai Chi can be so effective for balance because it develops this sense of proprioception.

In the 1890's C.S.Sherrington called it our sixth, but hidden or secret sense. Hidden because "that continuous but unconscious sensory flow from the movable parts of our body (muscles, tendons, and joints), by which their position and tone and motion are continually monitored and adjusted, but in a way which is hidden from us because it is automatic and unconscious".

We had a student who was referred to tai chi for peripheral neuropathy. The damage to his nerves meant he had no sensation in his feet which in turn caused him to fall a great deal. He was referred to help with his relaxation and to hopefully improve his balance. There were two aspects to his problem (1) reduced proprioception (2) the belief that as he couldn't feel the ground as he thought he should he was anxious about falling. This main seem obvious but have you ever worried about slipping on ice, tensed up when walking and caused yourself to fall? We helped with the relaxation quickly so the next and most interesting part was developing muscle sense (feedback) when the feedback system was damaged. My first question was "are you floating off the ground" to which he replied "of course not", "so how do you know?" He though for a moment

and came to the realisation that he sensed it elsewhere in his body so our job was to refine that feedback (proprioception). Within just a few short weeks his confidence grew and his balance improved; in fact his aims shifted from balance to being able to drive his car again and going back to work as a sales rep. Once he had a greater sense of what feedback was through sensory calibration exercises that are an integral part of tai chi – mindful walking, form, push-hands etc – his tai chi and general well-being improved at an amazing rate, and as this refinement moved from conscious effort to the unconscious automatic process it is designed to be he no longer needed to notice. Tai Chi became is tool for refined practice.

An aspect of falls prevention that seems to be regularly overlooked is that falling (due to gravity) is how we actually are able to move; lean forwards, shift your body weight to start movement and catch yourself by getting your leg there in time. Not getting your leg there in time is called tripping or 'falling over something'. Tai Chi works by stepping out first and sensing the group before releasing your weight into it rather than releasing your weight and hoping your leg will get there in time to catch you. Both form and push-hands involves moving into balance. Prof Cheng is often quoted as saying "We all have an excellent root you just have to stop resisting gravity".

To read more about tai chi and falls prevention please visit [www.fallspreventiontraining.co.uk](http://www.fallspreventiontraining.co.uk)





Y.C. Chiang said that the tail-bone (wei-lu) is “the General”

“The General” leads the rest of the body, the head, trunk, arms and legs, so that the body remains upright and does not lean, and is coordinated as a whole.

Also, no part of the body stops moving when doing Tai Chi. One slowly learns and senses where the body and where the arms and the legs, the hands and the feet, and the head and the trunk are in space. One tries to move the limbs in harmony, that is, with co-ordination. And this movement is done while constantly shifting the weight from one foot to the other.

Does Tai Chi movement like this develop or enhance proprioception more than other exercise? Did the elderly fall less because Tai Chi helped them know or sense where their bodies were in space? Did they better understand how to ‘right’ themselves if they stumbled? Did moving so that the small of the back led the movements enable them to remain or move more upright and maintain or regain stability of the body?

Maybe its effectiveness was due to its reputation for balance, so the elderly who practiced Tai Chi believed it worked and so fell less (the placebo effect)

Research in this area continues following the study mentioned and other studies that have followed since.

1999 Diane Hoxmeier student of Y.C. Chiang.

The way of Tai Chi arises from Yin and Yang

Yin and Yang are simply “Opening” and “Closing”

When practicing the form  
We must clearly know “Empty” and “Full”

Then coordinate “Empty” and “Full”  
with “Opening” and “Closing”

Space and time merge into one  
Mind, chi, body: three become one  
In time, if you follow this way  
You will find the wonder of Tai Chi

—Master Y.C. Chiang

## Am I in a Tai Chi Trance?

I was recently rereading a book entitled “My voice will go with you – Teaching tales of Milton Erickson”. When I reached the chapter discussing research into autohypnosis (trances) in Balinese culture; it seems that the use of trance states is part of their culture even to the point where researchers discovered people would go into a deep trance on their way to the market and stay in a trance through the whole shopping experience. It struck a chord for me as I’m fascinated how trance states occur and are used especially if we consider a trance is not just some sort of stage hypnosis trick, but actually just a focused state of attention/intention. My old tai chi teacher Nigel Sutton often discussed the importance of Martial Spirit - having the correct state of mind (spirit) in training and application - as essential in proper development. A friend and exceptional martial artist, Chris Parker, talked about going into trance whilst he practiced Silat, and there are many more examples I could quote.

With the Balinese research they found that people would start with body-orientation movement that involved closing their hands, attempting to stand on tip-toes etc. to connect to the here and now through getting reacquainted with their body. The movements acted both as awareness exercise and as a trigger for the trance state they wanted to access. It is the same process that is used in mindful meditation and even chi-kung to create/access the relaxed state of awareness.



With all this in mind, am I in a tai chi trance and what does that mean? The first movement in the Cheng Man Ching form is ‘Preparation’ – preparing yourself and becoming body-orientated; from here we move into beginning. At first beginners are more focussed on just remembering the sequence but with practice preparation and beginning set the tone for the sequence to come and the intention set is played through; maybe you practice your form for balance, for flow, for spatial awareness, for connectedness, for martial application or any one of many

possibilities and as you do the mindful attention is your developing tai chi trance. Maybe you use your imagination to play with ‘what if’ scenarios of defending against attackers or walking through an uneven terrain or working with the air around you as if you’re swimming in it.

All of this mindful play is your tai chi trance development. What trance do you enter when practicing tai chi weapon forms? What trance do you enter when practicing sword-play? How about push-hands? A push-hands trance can enable you to give up to the flow of the interplay so as to enable your unconscious mind to learn and hone your body skills with your conscious fears and disbeliefs removed. Being in a trance does not mean not paying attention; have you ever considered your daily journey to work which follows virtually the same route every time and how you often don’t even remember making that journey yet you still arrive safely as usual; if some part of you was not aware then how do you do it? Some of you may be aware that I am trained in hypnotherapy, NLP and CBT. Through my training and experience I have found that its peoples conscious fears and beliefs, in the most, that cause them to have problems. In tai chi it is peoples conscious limiting beliefs that prevent them from learning or progressing as their inner nay-sayer gets in the way. Yet when we change our focus of attention and develop the tai chi trance, it bypasses cognitive resistance and lets the inner explorer free.

Please practice to develop your tai chi trance and experience new levels of tai chi skill as you suspend conscious disbelief. Your unconscious mind already knows far more than you realise so set it free and enjoy your journey.

Mark Peters

I though we would share some ancient Sage wisdom. Written in B.C. 769 from the harem of the Palace of Wei.

“There are seven reasons,” said Confucius, “for which a man may divorce his wife... The seven reasons are|:-

Disobedience to her husband’s parents; not giving birth to a son; dissolute conduct;

jealousy of her husband’s attentions to other members of his harem; talkativeness; and thieving.

All these regulations were adopted by the Sages in harmony with the natures of men and women.”

Taken from *LYRICS OF THE CHINESE* by Helen Waddell





## PEARLS OF WISDOM ADVICE FROM MY MOTHER !

My mom passed away age 97 years. She was not an intellectual in the strict sense of the word, but I think she gave me advice to get through life in a much easier to use scenario than it would have been if she was.

Although nothing to do with Tai Chi I thought I would share them with you as the newsletter can always use good common sense and humour.———

1. The world values you at your OWN valuation. (always be confident of your ability to succeed in whatever you want in life, and let others see it.)
  2. If money becomes the most important think in your life you will never be truly happy (or rich)
  3. Never envy anyone anything.
  4. Never tell lies, especially if you haven't a good memory!
  5. Always help older people (she encouraged me to carry elderly neighbours shopping home for them from a really young age,) and this empathy with the older person has stayed with me.
  6. You need to keep mobile, it keeps you alive and healthy.
  7. Never spoil a child, no one likes spoilt children.
- If you cannot afford to pay cash for something, Don't have it! Save up, then get it.
8. If a man ever goes to hit you, hit him FIRST!
  9. Don't examine relationships too closely, you will just get more confused! (advise she gave my daughter when she asked her for advice and opinion on a new boyfriend)

And to finish, 2 more gems I love—

After watching a James Bond film in her 90s she turned to me and said "I think he is a bit promiscuous, don't you!"

"Don't wash your hair when you have your period, it will send you mad!" Obviously I did not take heed to that one "

Please share with us advice from your mom.... I look forward to reading and sharing it.

Jenny Peters

## "YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHING YET" Said the Wind!

After "The Great Storm" on Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> February I felt the need to share my experience of it and my feelings that night, by putting it down in writing

Anyone who knows me will tell you I don't talk "Chi" or "energies" very much. As a Nurse for most of my working life I interpret Chi as circulation of oxygen in the blood to your brain and major organs, which need this vital ingredient to function to their maximum; of course if your lungs are healthy and you are breathing normally this hopefully will be all the time.

Thus we are energized by the oxygen (we have energy), and yes in its broadest sense we take this from the air and the planet we live on.

On Friday night after a day of warnings that the storm battering the South Coast was on its way, it arrived with a vengeance.

Around midnight as I was getting ready to go to bed (yes I am a night bird) I stood in the conservatory that overlooks the garden listening to the roar of the wind. Something drew me outside, still cannot say what, as the noise was bad enough inside, but I just had to go.

I stood, listened, and felt, and now have difficulty in putting into words the experience.

Awesome, amazing, breathtaking, frightening, powerful, overwhelming, is not really enough to describe it. But I suppose the one emotion that was foremost was humbling.

Trees (even the largest, tallest and strongest) where bending almost 45 degrees as the gusts overpowered them. Branches snapping off and leaves swirling up from the ground, Shed roof tarpaulins being ripped off in enormous pieces to go racing high in the air across the neighbouring gardens, to be thrown to the ground in disgust.

We have express trains and heavy goods trains that rumble loudly at times past the bottom of our garden, but the noise they make is nothing compared to this night. The wind roared around me, and I suppose the only way I would describe it was this sudden feeling of power/energy the likes of which I have never felt before. It was something akin to a connection to this power or whatever you choose to call

it, and it was incredible, it made my body almost tingle.

But I also felt that the power of this wind was generated by anger, it was as if nature was flexing its muscles and saying loudly "*this is the only way I can speak to you, to warn you, that if you do not heed me You ain't seen nothing yet*". Looking around the world at all the natural disasters that in part we have caused (and are still causing) by our abuse of nature it seems that we need to take that warning to heart.

I amazed myself by what I have written, as I am a pretty down to earth person normally, not prone to waxing lyrical about the weather but just taking it for granted that we are doing something to protect our planet.

But I got the message, and I hope for all our sakes that many others with the power to try and turn the tide did also.

Below is a poem that I wrote a couple of years ago (must be the witch that Mark says I am!) and seems quite appropriate now to finish.

By Jenny Peters

### Fighting Back

We must stand up and be counted, to try and turn the tide  
While our dwindling wildlife still have places to hide  
While your children can still run through fields of green,  
And ice and mountains can still be seen.

Because the world is being raped, it has started fighting back  
Gathering all its power to launch the ULTIMATE attack!  
Earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes, the madness has just begun  
Will we awake one dreadful day, to a world without the sun?

### WORLD TAI CHI DAY APRIL 26th

This year we're planning a big one!! In connection with Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) and Active Parks, we are planning a world tai chi day event to be held outside the Council House in Birmingham City Centre (near the fountain). Spread the word, rope in your tai chi classmates and even your unsuspecting friends. More details to follow so watch this space, the website and check with your instructors. The largest event yet was Centenary Square where we had over 150 people so lets top that!!



## GUINNESS CAKE

### INGREDIENTS——

1 lb Self Raising Flour  
 1 lb Fruit  
 ½ lb Margarine or Butter  
 ½ lb Brown Sugar  
 3 eggs  
 ½ a pint Guinness  
 Spice, Cinnamon, Nutmeg (optional) ½  
 a teaspoon if used.  
 ½ a teaspoon of Bicarbonate of Soda

### METHOD——

Put fruit, marg, brown sugar & Guinness in a saucepan, heat until margarine is melted, leave to cool slightly.

Sieve flour spices & bicarb into a bowl. Beat eggs & mix into the cooled liquid mixture.

Pour the lot into the flour & beat well for a few minutes. Make sure all the flour is absorbed into the mixture.

Then Pour mixture into a 9 inch lined tin and place into a pre-heated oven gas mark 3 or 150 c. and bake for 1 hour on mark 3 and then another hour on 1 ½ or 80 c.

Make sure it is cooked by testing centre with knife until it comes out clean.

Happy Baking! —

Recipe kindly submitted by Soy from the Erdington Class.

“Promise me you’ll always remember,

You’re braver than you believe,  
 Stronger than you seem.  
 And smarter than you think.”

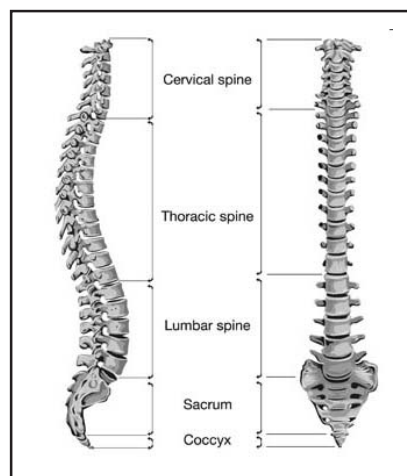


Christopher Robin to Pooh.

## Have you got the spine for it?

Humans are among a very few animals that move through the world in an upright position. The position puts stresses on the spine not experienced by 4 legged animals. The natural curves in our spine are thus important in providing shock absorption and structural integrity during upright, seated or standing activities.

I remember when I first began training in tai chi and being told a few of the standard tai chi postural adjustments, one of which was “tuck your tailbone under and straighten you back” or words to that effect... but how correct is this? How is our spine designed to function?



Many people are unaware that, as humans, we have three natural spinal curves that are formed in early childhood. We are born with one continuous C-shaped curve. As infants, when we begin to raise our heads, and later, when we push up on our hands to crawl, the concave (or lordotic) curves of the neck (the cervical spine) and low back (the lumbar spine) are formed. The convex curve of the mid-back where the ribs attach (the thoracic spine) is left over from the original C-shaped curve. Please note, some children walk before they crawl and never fully develop the spinal curves. The person with resulting straight spine (referred to as the ‘military spine’) is prone to neck and back problems as well as headaches related to structural stress.

A healthy lower back depends on good structural alignment, unrestricted range of joint motion, maintenance of the lumbar curve, and the support of a sufficiently strong lower-back and

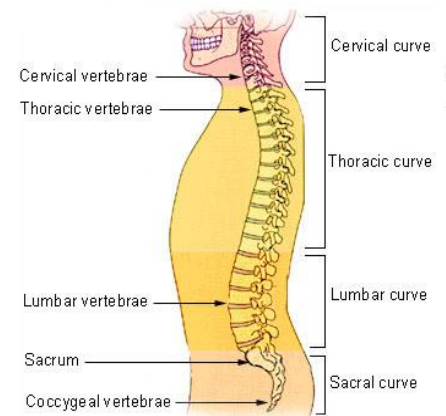
abdominal muscles. The practice of good posture while standing and sitting, along with daily exercise to maintain muscle tone and joint movement, will help to reduce the risks of lower back injury.

Tucking the tailbone is contrary to good back health as it can flatten then spines lumbar curve., just as over-arching the lower back can put strain on vertebrae and cause tension in the back muscles. In the practice of tai chi form and push-hands the lower back with naturally tilt and release when changing weight and bending your knees. This action acts to mobilise the spine and feed the intervertebral discs which work similar to a sponge.

Releasing the lower-back may be a better description than ‘tuck the tailbone’ as it aids natural positioning and promotes good spinal health.

The correct spine curves both act as a shock absorber and spring-like compressive power for tai chi application.

Mark Peters



### Training Dates

We hold monthly advanced training session in South Birmingham.

9.30 to 12.30 (3 hours) - £25

### **Dates for 2014**

13th April  
 18th May  
 29th June

### **Camp is planned for 3rd August**

14th Sept  
 12th Oct  
 9th Nov  
 7th December.