



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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功夫

Breathing Life into Your Tai Chi

Breath is the bridge, which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts. Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again. — Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen Master

Each year we have a focus for the weekend camp and this year's theme was "*Breathing life into your tai chi*". There was such good feedback, and interest in exploring the breathing patterns, that I've included this article in our newsletter. Please remember breathing is a natural thing so do not force it.

When thinking of ways to explain the different methods, I was interested to find that what we call abdominal breathing or dan-tien breathing is the same as 'Kegel Exercises' for improved bladder control, which was interesting. Breathe down into your lower abdomen, breath out and contract pelvic floor muscles and lower abdomen (gently). Huiyin cavity (perineum).

When you practice the different breathing methods, start with standing shaking (1), then standing relaxation/meditation (2). Then a breathing method. Repeat 1 & 2 before each breathing method.

Nei-gong and Qi-gong breathing methods.

Normal Abdominal Breathing

Stand with both hands touching the lower dan tian lightly. (The dan tian is found slightly under and behind the navel.) This light touch can help you feel the movement of the abdominal muscles and thus increasing the communication level between your mind and the lower dan tian.

Inhale deeply through the nose while gently pushing your abdominal muscles out and huiyin down. As you exhale, draw your abdomen inward and pull the huiyin cavity upward gently. (The huiyin cavity is located between the genitals and anus. It equates to the perineum).

You should practice this method of breathing until your mind is able to control the abdominal muscles effectively and efficiently. Only then, can this area remain relaxed and allow the qi to circulate freely. Allow a minimum of six months of training this type of breathing to allow the body to adjust to the conditioning; then proceed on to the next form of breathing exercises.

Reverse Abdominal Breathing

Once again, stand with both hands touching the lower dan tian and the tongue touching the palate of the mouth. When you inhale, draw in your abdomen and pull up your huiyin cavity. When you exhale, push the abdomen out and huiyin cavity down gently. Practicing reverse abdominal breathing may cause some tension in the dan tian. If that happens, stop using this method of breathing and return to normal abdominal breathing. You may also gently massage the abdomen to relieve the tension. As long as abdominal area is relaxed, you should not have a problem.

Reverse breathing – important points.

"Reverse abdominal breathing, traditionally called Taoist breathing, and reverses the natural in-and-out movements of the abdomen that one finds in natural breathing. In reverse breathing, the abdomen contracts inward during inhalation and relaxes outward during exhalation.

Though reverse breathing offers many of the benefits of natural breathing because of its similar emphasis on moving the abdomen, it is traditionally used by chi kung practitioners, healers, and

martial artists to help draw energy deep into their tissues and bones, as well as to direct energy—for storage, for action, or for healing—to any part of their organism. Part of the reason for the great power of this practice is the change in the pressure differential between the chest and abdomen. When the diaphragm moves downward and the belly contracts inward during inhalation, the resulting pressure in the abdomen helps "pack" the breath energy into the abdominal tissues and organs, as well as into the spine. When the diaphragm relaxes upward and the belly relaxes outward during exhalation, the sudden release of pressure guides the energy outward wherever one's attention is directed.

It is therefore extremely important when undertaking reverse breathing to be clear about where one puts one's attention. Otherwise, one's energy may be quickly lost.

In spite of its many benefits, reverse breathing should only be undertaken when one is quite comfortable with natural abdominal breathing. Without this level of comfort, most people who attempt reverse breathing tense their faces, necks, and chests and draw their diaphragms upward as they inhale.

This not only negates the positive effects of the practice, but can also lead to a variety of problems, including chest pain, diarrhoea, an increase in heartbeat or blood pressure, and energy stagnation. It can also lead to mental and emotional confusion and a scattering of the energy of awareness. ..."

Yongquan Breathing

In this breathing exercise, stand with your legs open to about shoulder width apart. Again, the hands touch the abdominal area and the tongue touches the palate of mouth gently. First, inhale and lead the qi to the real lower dan tian. Next, exhale, squat down slightly and imagine you are pushing the feet downward. Through this

image of pushing, you are using your mind to lead the qi down through the yongquan cavity. When you imagine pushing the feet downward, your mind should aim at least six inches under the feet so that qi does not get trapped. A variation of this exercise is to twist your torso to one side as you squat and exhale.

On the next breath, twist your torso to the opposite side. This will increase the stretching of the tendons and ligaments in the ankles, knees, and hips resulting in a strengthening of the joints. If you practice this correctly, you may feel the hot or warm feeling caused by qi accumulation at the bottom of your feet in just a few minutes. To remove the qi accumulated, simply raise your heels and then your toes, alternately, a couple times after you have finished practicing.

Laogong Breathing

In laogong breathing, use your mind to lead the qi to the laogong cavity located at the centre of your palms. Again, stand with legs opened as wide as your shoulders. The hands touch the abdominal area and the tongue touches the palate of mouth gently. First, inhale and lead the qi to the real dan tian. Next, exhale and imagine you are pushing your hands downward without moving your hands. Through this pushing image, you are using your mind to lead qi through the laogong cavities. When you imagine you are pushing your hands downward, your mind should aim at least six inches beyond the palms. If you practice correctly, in just a few minutes you may feel some sensations, a tingling or static feeling at the palms.

Four Gates Breathing (four gates are your yongquan and laogong points)

This breathing is a combination of yongquan and laogong breathing. The posture remains the same as in the previous two exercises. As you inhale, use your mind to lead qi to the real dan tian. As you exhale, gently squat downward and imagine you are pushing both your hands and feet downward.

Taiji Ball Breathing (Taiji Qiu Hu Xi)

In addition, hold both of your hands in front of your lower dan tian with palms facing each other. When you inhale, draw the abdomen inward, and the huiyin is moving upward (i.e., internal ball is condensing), while the palms spread apart (i.e., external ball is expanding.)

Then exhale to expand the internal ball while pressing your both palms toward each other.

After you have practiced for a few minutes, you may begin to feel an invisible qi ball forming between the palms. The longer you practice, the stronger the qi can be felt. This is the foundation of taiji ball nei-gong training.



Its that time of year again when we need to be planning the **Kai Ming Christmas Party**.

Last year we all went to Flavourz and the feedback was excellent as we had the private room. We have therefore booked the private room again.

The place has changed names and had a refit bit its still the same staff and the menu has actually been expanded. Its now called Saphari.

It's a buffet restaurant near Junction 2 of M5 and serves 4 regions of food – Indian, Chinese, Italian and Mexican – plus has a fun relaxed atmosphere and is great value at around £18 per head.

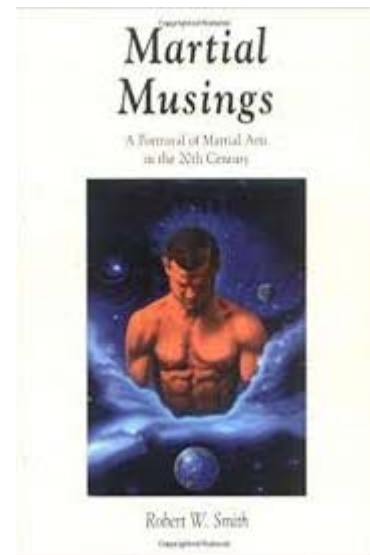
We also had Christmas meal at lunchtime rather than in the evening which was really well received so we are planning this year to be a lunchtime event too.

The date will be Sunday 15th December and the time 2pm.

We need £5 per person mimimum deposit (non-refundable) ASAP and the balance no late than 30th November. No bookings after that date.

Please let your instructor know how many places you would like to book or contact Mark & Jenny on markpeters@kaiming.co.uk or phone **0121 251 6172**

INSIGHTS



I recently became aware of a fascinating book, “Martial Musings”, a portrayal of Martial Arts in the 20th Century (2001), written by Robert W Smith, who was known as the world’s leading authority on Asian martial arts.

In a straightforward direct manner it details R. W. Smiths 50+ year interest in what he liked to call “Combatives”

He started out training in wrestling and boxing in his late teens, before going on to Judo and then on to the Chinese internal arts of Tai Chi, Bagua and Hsing-I.

In the 400 page book containing over 300 illustrations, he gives an insight into the minds and ways, thoughts, philosophies and concepts of the great teachers he spent time with, sharing with the readers his study of the lives of extraordinary individuals.

His recollections of training personally with Cheng Man Ching are particularly interesting .It included aspects of the form and push hands, which Robert preferred to term “sensing hands” since the “push” comes after “sensing”.

Robert Smith experienced Cheng’s softness during sensing hands, stating: “With him you never had the feeling you where even in contact with his clothing. There was no place that you could put your hand on him that gave enough substance for you to push on”

He recalled how Cheng handled everyone easily in “sensing hands” and stated “When I wasn’t being handled, I intently watched him with others. As always, he

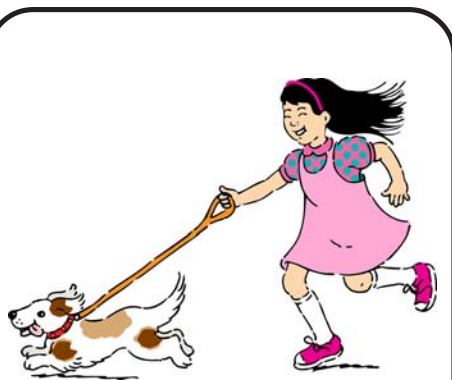
advanced into and softly disposed of his partner. Cheng advised us to step, only forward, never backward and I never saw him do otherwise”, adding, “He never used force. Everything he did was soft. He seldom made a fist. When he did, it was so light it looked like a child’s half-open one. Yet none could withstand his swinging hand against their forearm, or hurt his thin arm when the roles were reversed”.

Robert goes on to explain how Cheng Man Ching would allow him to attack him with a technique of his choice, and the Master defeated him every time.

Cheng told Robert of the time he asked Yang Cheng Fu a question on application and function. Yang put two light fingers on his throat and threw him 20 feet, knocking him out. When the memory of this faded, impetuous Cheng asked another question. This time Professor Cheng told me Yang put a hand that felt like cotton on his jaw and threw him, again knocking him out!

He recalled how Cheng placed importance on footwork when in a street attack and repeated this advice, “Don’t over analyze your opponent. Don’t worry about his posture, his hands, which leg is forward, or things like that. Don’t even think about your own hands. Instead, keep your mind on your own legs. This way, everything will work out fine”.

Book Review by
Peter Jagger
Cotteridge Park Class.



Sign found in a garden centre

WARNING
*All unattended children
will be given a double-espresso
and a free puppy*

What’s in an Experience?

Experiential understanding is the understanding of truth anything else is apparent understanding. If I spend hours studying history I will may become a learned man. I will ‘know’ so much and yet I will not know the truth of any of the information because facts dates etc cannot give true experience of anything. What is experienced can be related to others but the experience cannot be given. If we want to give somebody an experience then all we can do is give guidelines that relate to our own experience. An example a friend wants to learn to swim but is a little frightened. I am keen to help, I tell them how wonderful it is to glide though the water and that there is nothing to fear

I want to give them the experience of swimming. I introduce them to water and then demonstrate how to swim. Whilst learning to swim my friend will experience a similar experience that I had while learning but it will not be the same experience and my experience whilst teaching my friend to swim is very different from my friend’s experience of learning. I am relaxed and confident of my ability and safety, my friend is entering into a scary activity he has to put his trust in me and he will also feel self conscious and at times frustrated when he can’t do it. With practice he improves and learns to swim he will develop his own way of swimming that suits him. If he becomes very keen on swimming he may go to a coach who will teach him how to improve his technique. My friend has learnt something of the truth of swimming. Another friend becomes very interested in swimming and having watched a swimming gala goes to the library and finds a book on Olympic swimming champions he reads it and becomes fascinated by the whole subject of swimming history. He furthers his reading learning all the secrets of the great coaches of swimming. He becomes an expert on swimming he knows so much about swimming. The three of us sit watching a swimming race on TV my first friend and I are astounded by our friends knowledge we feel humbled as he

explains how the winning swimmer has used a particular variation of a stroke to win the race. My first friend is eager to try this technique and asks our expert who confidently demonstrates the intricacies of the movement how the wrist and elbow turn with the hip etc. We suggest going swimming the next day so that we can test it in the water our friend the expert cannot make it, it seems he’s allergic to water.

We can all become knowing without experience. I know the form because I learnt how to do somebody else’s movements and copied them I received verbal instruction in order to understand what I should be feeling and I read books on the subject to further my understanding. My experience and exposure to different teachings has taught me to discriminate more clearly, to feel whether a position is physiologically correct rather than taking other peoples word for it. In push hands our experience of the activity can only be the truth of the moment however the nature of pushing hands means that while we may be practising the activity we are not really present with the truth of feeling. If we are to really gain insight into our sensitivity then we have to access a subtler level of truth. This truth is that how we react in push hands may not be the truth in terms of developing martial ability. An example I push hands with a smaller lighter partner they start to push and I start to turn the waist to neutralize, my partners push is partially deflected he is now in a weaker position I then use a small amount of effort to complete the deflection and my partner is uprooted. I have failed to listen and invest in loss I have ‘won’. I take this ability into a sparring situation and find I get hit a lot and can’t work out why. The reason is that I am not prepared to experience being moved I cannot let my ego rest I have to find some immediate gain in what I am doing. In order to gain self defence skills from Tai Chi that is taught with the emphasis on developing these skills in push hands then you have change your perception of success.

In a pushing hands competition two competitor’s go hell for leather we see some spectacular skills one man seems

on the brink of defeat about to be pushed out but with great determination and a strong root he stops and then uses his opponents desperate lunge to put him off balance the man flies through the air and their is great applause. We have seen a champion of pushing hands at work. The same man enters a fighting competition he is punched senseless and cannot work out why. The skill that enabled him to root and manipulate his opponent out of an area had taught him to defend positions that cannot be defended when the dynamic of the activity changes, an arm that is trying to push you has a very different dynamic than one that is trying to punch you. This man's pushing hands did not inform his self defence skill. If we want to develop self defence skills from pushing hands then we must not manipulate our partner in order to stop them moving our centre we must develop the sensitivity to know (experience) when to enter and gain the upper hand through good structure and when to concede ground and withdraw in order to gain a better position. This knowledge alone would not prepare someone for a fighting competition. But if studied and practised honestly then a person will have developed some physical intelligence, which will enable them to avoid using brute strength. At this subtler level of truth one must continually ask the question am I truly feeling and responding to my partner or are other factors influencing my response.

Is my status in the class such that I must win, at the other end of the spectrum of ego is my self esteem so low that I lose my structure and never gain the advantage, or I do I pride myself on some aspect of pushing hands such as yielding and so look only for opportunities to use this skill. While evolving in the activity we may find that there are all sorts of reasons why we fail to pay proper attention and it is important not to become despondent about this or to judge yourself, this is self-cultivation, realising how your ego works not trying to suppress or ignore it.

Practised correctly the practise of pushing hands can lead to a heightened

understanding of and sensitivity to force, practised incorrectly it will lead to self delusion and the use of excessive force. Not only must you experience the activity but also you must be aware of how you achieved the result, if you cause your partner to be put off balance then be aware of whether you had to use force to achieve the result, when you use structure and a relaxed non-striving approach the feeling is very different.



Tai Chi Weekend Camp

This year was focused on breathing and the feedback was excellent. Lots of new students attended, as well as some of the regulars.

One bit of feedback was that more would have come but it was in the main school holidays and Summer holiday weeks. We have taken this on board and next year the camp will be the weekend off 17th & 18th October. That means we will include the monthly advanced training session within that weekend too, so more instructors and trainees will be attending.

We have plenty of time to plan it and if there is anything specific you'd like included, please let us know. Maybe weapons, a session on Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism etc. email markpeters@kaiming.co.uk or call 0121 251 6172

50+ Years Fun Memories

Do you realise that when you were a kid, a mobile was something that hung over a baby's cot?

Showaddywaddy were cool?

Social Networking meant chatting in a pub?

Fast food meant beans on toast?

Everybody spent all day on platforms even when they weren't waiting for a train?

A mouse was something that ate cheese and lived in a hole?

And you had to get up to change channel on the WOODEN TELLY?



Recipe Corner

QUICK GNOCCHI HOTPOT

500g Good quality bought fresh tomatoe sauce (flavoured with basil if wished)
800g Good quality bought potato gnocchi
6 slices parma ham (or other air-dried ham)
and a small pot of pesto for dolloping!

Peel and chop a medium red onion.
Heat a tablespoon of Olive Oil in a large-lidded, shallow casserole or wide heat proof dish, add the onion and fry for 6-7 minutes or until just coloured and translucent.

Stir in the tomato sauce, bring to a simmer, cover and cook for 5 minutes.

At the same time cook the Gnocchi in salted boiling water according to packet instructions until they rise to the surface, then drain and stir into the tomato base. Heat the grill,

To Finnish. Arrange the ham in piles on top of the Gnocchi without touching each other, then dot with pesto (using 1-2 tbsps in total or to taste). Pop under the grill for 4-5 minutes until the ham is crisp and lightly browned. Serve straightaway.

Fried diced Aubergine may be added also if wished.

PLEASE NOTE:

Please send your Newsletter contributions for future issues to markpeters@kaiming.co.uk

Advanced classes / instructor training

Venue: Weoley Hill Village Hall, Weoley Hill, Bournville.

Sunday: 9.30-12.30 advanced classes (£30), 1-3pm trainee classes (£10)

Sept 22th

Oct. 20th

Nov. 10th

Dec. 8th - includes grading